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ABSTRACT

The strengths and weaknesses of the traditional external quality controls exerted by government and accrediting bodies to monitor colleges and universities are examined, along with the importance of institutional self-regulation. Government involvement in American higher education is traced historically, showing that until recently the oversight function was limited to institutional licensure and statewide planning and coordination. However, accreditation as an indicator of quality has come under strong criticism, and some states have more actively attempted to determine whether institutions are providing quality education. Increased government involvement in academic affairs has also been controversial. In order for higher education institutions to ensure quality control, an effective program assessment is needed that includes both a process and an outcome orientation. Broad participation of college staff in the self-study of academic program quality is needed, along with analysis of the following factors: program goals, organization, facilities, faculty, students, academic program issues, research, public service, and future plans. The self-study results should also be reviewed by an impartial, external consultant. A substantial bibliography is appended. (SW)

ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Research Report 1983

The Path to Excellence:
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

by Laurence R. Marcus,
Anita O. Leone, and
Edward D. Goldberg

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Higher education has always been concerned with quality. However, the conditions of the 1980s have intensified the concern. There are two basic reasons for this. First, the belief that the "quality" institutions can best compete in an atmosphere of declining sources of students and revenues and more effectively attract faculty in high-demand fields. Second, the fact that society now demands institutional accountability. Public funders of higher education have increased their scrutiny and insist on more efficient and effective use of tax dollars, and today's consumers are more likely to express dissatisfaction with institutions and seek remedy through the courts.

With an increased concern for quality, debate increases over its definition. In general terms, quality is a "degree of excellence"—a relative concept. One extreme in defining quality is to set no standards of excellence. In this case, quality always exists in the mind of individuals who make up the institution because of the human trait that no one intentionally does a bad job. Individuals can justify their performance as quality work by identifying other institutions whose performance is not as good. The other extreme is to define quality by the characteristics of those institutions with the highest academic status. This process usually ignores any differences in the educational mission or purpose of the institutions. A more reasonable approach to defining quality is first to have a clear understanding of the institutional mission and role and then to identify specific characteristics and activities that an institution must have in order to successfully fulfill this mission and role.

The attainment and maintenance of quality depend upon understanding how to measure it and the power to implement changes where necessary. The problem of having external forces such as governmental agencies or accrediting bodies define quality is two-fold: they might have an inaccurate concept of an institutions' role and mission and they lack the power to implement and supervise day-to-day activities. More likely, quality can be assured only when there is internal consensus of what is necessary to best achieve the institutional role and mission-consensus developed through self-study and self-regulation.

In this report by Laurence R. Marcus, Director, Office for State Colleges, Anita Leone, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor and Director for the Board of Higher Education Activities, and Edward Goldberg, Assistant Chancellor of Higher Education for Academic Affairs, all with the New Jersey De-

partment of Higher Education, the strengths and weaknesses of the traditional external quality controls exerted by government and accrediting bodies are examined. The importance of institutional self-regulation is then reviewed, and finally, the process of self-regulation is detailed. This report will be a valuable tool for institutions that want to develop standards and practices that will maintain or improve their quality.

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As growth in public revenues has become increasingly difficult to secure, the interest of legislators and those in executive agencies of government regarding the accountability of tax-supported appropriations has broadened. The necessity for proof that public funds are being expended in a cost-effective manner, to good end, and with a demonstrable benefit to those being served escaped higher education for many years; that appears no longer to be the case. But for government to ask such questions of colleges and universities departs from a centuries-old tradition that has kept government at arm's length from the academic activity of our institutions of higher learning. Historically the relationship, particularly after the Dartmouth College case, was laissez-faire.

Beginning with the normal schools of the early nineteenth century and then with the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, public funds found their way to support a sphere of activity that to that time had been private in finance and usually sectarian in clientele. Federal spending programs for higher education usually paralleled a perceived compelling national interest: industrializing America, avoiding or reducing discontent among veterans home from war, meeting the challenge of the Russians, meeting the challenge of the American dream, and so on. By the late 1970s, all colleges and universities in America were receiving between one-eighth and one-sixth of their budgets from the federal government (Edwards 1980, p. 75); in fact, the independent sector has become so reliant on the public coffers that many observers wonder whether the truly private college has disappeared.

The independent sector has become so reliant on the public coffers that many observers wonder whether the truly private college has disappeared.

What Is the Trend for Government Regulations?

Regulation is not usually far behind public money. Thus, it is no wonder that state and federal government regulators, having expended their activity in many areas over the last three to four decades, have finally reached higher education's core. Until recently, the oversight function was limited to institutional licensure and to state-level planning and coordination, including the approval of new degree programs. Now, such efforts as performance budgeting (Peterson et al. 1977, p. 34), performance auditing (Berdahl 1977, p. 36), and state review of existing academic programs (Barak and Berdahl 1978, p. 55; Bogue 1980, p. 71) are becoming more common. Even more indicative of greater involvement of government is the fact that at least 17 states have provided their higher education agency with

the responsibility and general powers to accredit institutions and programs within their jurisdiction (Harcleroad 1980a, p. 1).

Government activity in academic matters is not without controversy. Increased quality review activity by the states is supported by such diverse groups as the Education Commission of the States (1979, pp. 4–5) and the Sloan Commission on Government and Higher Education (Kaysen et al. 1980, p. 23). However, the opposition is equally as impressive. Joining college and university leaders are those from the accreditation establishment who contend that the historical use of the regional associations and disciplinary and professional groups as guarantors of educational quality should be maintained. As is noted by Trivett (1976, p. 7), the federal government has relied on accreditation as the basis for eligibility for federal funds, and the states have relied on it as evidence of quality for the maintenance of a license to operate as well as for continued eligibility for state funds. Many would have it remain that way.

What Role Does Accreditation Play?

However, accreditation as an indicator of quality has come under strong criticism, in part since accrediting bodies do not generally attempt to define educational quality but, instead, seek to assess an institution's quality according to the institution's own mission and self-definition (Troutt 1981, p. 48). Thus, an institution with limited vision would be assessed according to how well it accomplishes its goals. The institution discusses its progress toward meeting its goals through a self-study. According to Semrow (1977, p. 4), however, it is the exceptional self-study that is truly evaluative. Other criticisms, including Hollander's (1981, p. 5), contend that, since regional accreditation teams are composed of persons from other institutions in the region, the process becomes ingrown and the denial of accreditation is virtually impossible. Others cite as problems the lengthy (often 10-year) period of accreditation granted to institutions and the secrecy surrounding the report of the review team. Further, proponents of greater government involvement point out that accrediting associations do not monitor or enforce standards once accreditation is bestowed, nor are they willing to make public those standards that an institution does not meet (Trivett 1976, p. 59).

Whether accreditation continues to serve as the basis for eligibility for public funds remains to be seen. As has been mentioned, some states already have become more activist in

attempting to ascertain that institutions are, indeed, providing a quality education. Some observers, including Donald K. Smith (1980, p. 57), believe that the greatest safeguard against an increased state role is for the institutions themselves to strengthen their own evaluation activities.

How Can Institutions Ensure Quality Control?

Assessment of the quality of educational programs is no easy matter since, as Scott (1981) observes, "quality has proven to be an elusive concept." Nevertheless, a comprehensive, systematic appraisal effort can assist the faculty and the institution's leadership in making judgments regarding the strength of its academic offerings. Implicit, then, is an evaluation approach with a formative orientation intended to enhance program quality. To do so requires a focus both on the program's process (the manner in which it operates) and outcome (the actual effects of the program).

Just as the evaluation needs to be comprehensive, so, too, should there be broad participation in the process. Chaired by a person of recognized stature, a review committee should include both senior and junior program faculty, academic administrators, and faculty from other departments. A subcommittee of program faculty should prepare a self-study that should serve as the foundation for the program review.

At a minimum, the self-study should include a discussion of the following: the goals of the program (within the context of the broader institutional mission); the program's organization including internal processes and personnel practices; available fiscal resources and facilities including laboratories, library holdings, and so on; the curriculum including course sequencing, comparison to professional standards, relevance to student goals, etc.; the faculty, including demographic data, workload requirements, specializations, scholarly activity, etc.; the students, including entry and exit characteristics, class sizes, graduation rates, placement, etc.; and current issues before the program, including perceived weaknesses and future plans

Included in the self-study should be appropriate quantitative data: number of graduates, attrition rates, enrollments, student demand trends, volumes in the library, faculty publications, test scores, success of graduates, course costs, cost-effectiveness data, and so forth. But, it must be understood that quantitative data alone do not tell the entire story and may even be counterproductive to quality, since as Becker (1972, p. 6) points out,

an overreliance on numerical factors, such as average cost per credit hour or per graduate, encourages faculty turnover and discourages rewards for scholarship in an effort to keep costs down.

Thus, it is imperative that the assessment of program goals, student learning, faculty performance, and curriculum have a qualitative bent. For example, according to Miller (1979, pp. 92–94), an examination of faculty quality should move beyond background characteristics and workload statistics to a focus on the quality of teaching, ability to retain students, stability of the faculty, professional activities of the faculty, faculty activity in research and publication, and the vitality of the department including its interest in innovation and ability to be self-critical.

Is Outside Guidance Useful?

Once completed, the self-study should be submitted to an impartial, external consultant selected for his/her professional standing and knowledgeable about the issues and trends in the particular field of study. This person should be asked to review the self-study, to pose a series of follow-up questions to the faculty, and then to visit the campus to discuss the issues with program and other faculty, students, and administrators. The result of this activity should be a cogent report that comments not only on whether the program is accomplishing its stated goals but also the extent to which those goals make sense given the institution, its students, and the trends in the field of study. Most important is the consultant's judgment regarding the candor of the self-study, the program's ability to be self-critical, and its willingness to act upon identified weaknesses. The consultant's report should be used by the institution's leadership as the basis for decisions regarding the program's future.

Institutions would be wise to circulate broadly the consultant's report or a candid summary of it. The University of Chicago's approach of including the reports of external consultants in an official university publication is a model worth repeating (Miller 1979, p. 272). As Howard Bowen (1980, p. 37) has commented, institutions really don't want to reveal their own problems, but unless the entire college community is made aware of them, efforts toward improvement can only be limited, and unless the broader community is informed, accountability can only be limited.

Thus, comprehensive, forthright, decision-oriented program evaluations, made public, are the best way for an institution to demonstrate that it is concerned about quality, that its efforts are worthy of continued public funding, and that it does not need the on-campus presence of state evaluators in order to be accountable and responsive to public concerns. To do less would be to invite more regulation and greater state involvement in assessing academic and other educational outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the last decade, tension has been growing between America's colleges and universities (both public and independent) and government (both federal and state). There has been an increasing sense among many, including state higher education coordinating agencies, that institutional quality is no longer guaranteed by voluntary accreditation and that an enhanced state role is required to ensure excellence. This increasing focus on the most appropriate means to ensure the accountability of institutions in their expenditure of public funds has grown into an anxiety about government presence in the academy. The anxiety has been heightened as state agencies have begun to shift their focus from fiscal accountability to accountability regarding educational outcomes and the quality of academic offerings. According to Lindeman (1974, pp. 175, 178), educators fear that accountability—a term that did not appear in the *Education Index* until 1970—will result in the loss of institutional autonomy and academic freedom and that control of the academy will shift to outsiders with little knowledge of the mission, goals, and process of higher education.

Historically, government has left the process of reviewing the quality of college programs to the accrediting associations. As is noted by Trivett (1976, p. 7), most states accept accreditation as evidence of sufficient quality to qualify an institution for state licensure. The federal government, in turn, recognizes state licensure and accreditation as preconditions for eligibility for federal funds.

Despite the fact of its historic centrality to perceptions about institutional quality, voluntary accreditation, as currently practiced, has come under strong fire. Lack of rigor and standards in the review process, lack of serious self-criticism on the part of institutional participants, and a "back scratching" ethos all have been alleged by critics of accreditation. Trivett (1976, p. 59) points out that associations do not monitor or enforce standards of excellence, nor do they report which standards a college fails to meet.

Those responsible for allocating and administering public funds have taken these criticisms seriously. In fact, at least 17 states have given their higher education agency the responsibility and general powers to accredit institutions and programs within their jurisdiction (Harcleroad, 1980a, p. 1). As a result, the status of voluntary accreditation as the guarantor of excellence in academe has been threatened. Joseph Semrow (1977, p. 2) has concluded that voluntary accreditation's future role

"will depend to the extent to which it is able to maintain order in its own house and to retain the confidence and support of the institutions and the public in general including government agencies." Riesman (1980) believes that the regional associations have at least two major reasons for improving the accreditation process: first, to "prevent debasement of the academic coinage" (p. 336) and second, to keep the federal regulators at some distance from the process of assessing academic quality.

Regardless of how well the regional associations are able to adjust to the increasing demands for rigor in the accreditation process, it is unlikely that the trend toward greater government concern regarding academic excellence will abate. Even the leadership of the accreditation umbrella, the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA), has acknowledged that

> *accreditation cannot, by itself, serve as the basis for determining sound investment of federal or state funds; neither can it function as an arm of the government in policing compliance with federal and/or state consumer protection laws or other regulations (Young and Chambers 1980, p. 93).*

Thus, it seems apparent that if educators want to keep government regulators focused on fiduciary rather than academic matters, they would be wise to implement an ongoing, rigorous process for the review of their existing academic programs.

This monograph explores the issues surrounding educational quality and public policy. It begins with a discussion of the role of government in the academy, including the debate regarding government regulation. Chapter two surveys the historical development of accreditation and discusses the complaints against it. Chapter three includes the responses to perceived weaknesses of accreditation by state legislatures and executive agencies and builds the case for institutional self-regulation as the answer to public quality concerns. Chapter four discusses, at length, the approaches to academic evaluation and institutional self-assessment that are most likely to provide worthwhile, decision-oriented data to college administrators and that should serve to satisfy public policy makers, students, and others that the institution takes seriously its trust to produce high quality academic programs.

GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN ACADEME

The debate that has raged during the last decade concerning increased governmental presence on college and university campuses surely would confirm Alexis de Tocqueville's observation that Americans believe that democracy and limited government go hand-in-glove and that Americans will not hesitate to speak their mind even when the evil they seek to redress is mild in world terms.

In Europe the national government has directed educational matters. In 1808, Napoleon established the Ministry of Education to oversee France's new public school system. Over a century later (1919), Britain created its University Grants Committee to supervise the distribution of public funds to that nation's colleges. Such an approach did not occur here.

Early Government Involvement

Despite the fact that on September 23, 1642, Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop presided over the final examinations given to Harvard's first nine seniors (Harcleroad 1980b, p. 1), early American colleges were relatively free from government oversight. This tradition carried into the federal period, partially as a result of the Tenth Amendment, which provides that all areas not expressly mentioned in the Constitution are the responsibility of the states. Since the Constitution is devoid of reference to education and higher education, they fall within the purview of the states. For many years, most states chose to limit the exercise of their authority to a tradition that extends back to the awarding of the first "state university" charters by Frederick II in the thirteenth century (Hobbs 1978, p. 7). This practice was transmitted to the North American continent in the early colonial times. Upon independence, the states, rather than the Crown, granted the charters.

One event that served to cement the laissez-faire posture of the states was the celebrated *Dartmouth College Case*. The colleges had been chartered by the King of England in 1769. Fiduciary and educational responsibility was held in trust by 12 persons. This arrangement stood for nearly half a century until the majority of the board of trustees voted to expel the president. The New Hampshire legislature sided with the college president and the board minority, and, in an effort designed to wrest control of the board, voted to increase board membership to 21. The governor was empowered to appoint the nine new trustees. Just to be sure that the college would remain accepta-

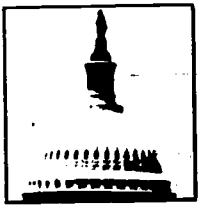
bly directed, the legislature also created a board of overseers with veto power over the trustees.

The original trustees took the matter to court. Arguing on their behalf, Daniel Webster stated to the justices of the United States Supreme Court:

> *The case before the Court is not of ordinary importance. . . . It affects not this college only, but every college, and all the literary institutions of the country. They have flourished, hitherto, and have become in a high degree respectable and useful to the community. . . . It will be dangerous, a most dangerous experiment, to hold these institutions subject to the rise and fall of popular parties, and the fluctuations of political opinions.* (Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward, *4 Wheat 518, 17 U.S. 518 [1819], 4 L. Ed. 629).*

The Supreme Court held that the original charter could not be tampered with and that the action of the legislature was, therefore, in violation of the college's rights. In so doing, the Court dug a moat around Dartmouth that kept the government away from its grounds.

Compelling National Interest



Such protection held for years to come. Governments occasionally provided grants to institutions of higher learning, but for the most part the colleges developed without government help or interference. Although some publicly financed colleges (usually normal schools) existed in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 that spurred the first major public effort in higher education. Congress was faced with a national problem that it believed required a national response, although one that would be undertaken by the states. The national imperative of that day (beyond, of course, saving the Union) was to develop the agricultural and technological capacity of America to support a country that was growing in population and expanding in acreage being utilized.

Most of the higher education activity of the federal government has been congruent with this principle of involvement resulting from compelling national interest. After World War II, the American people felt an obligation to those who had served in the armed services. Additionally, Congress was anxious to avoid the post-World War I discontent among veterans that led

to marches on Washington by the Bonus Army. Thus, the G.I. Bill of Rights was enacted. One of its major impacts was that it transformed higher education from an elite enterprise to one that served a mass population. This trend continued with the passage in 1958 of the National Defense Education Act. It was enacted to develop higher education in response to Russia's orbiting of the first artificial satellite the year before, but the Act also served to increase access. The transition to the opportunity for universal higher education came with the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Education Amendments of 1972, which first provided seats and financial aid to the postwar Baby Boom middle class and then to the poor and minorities in an effort to help them join the middle class. Congress reaffirmed this goal with the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1980. Even with the federal budgetary reductions of the Reagan Administration, Congress has indicated that it will hold the line with federal student assistance programs so that those who can least afford higher education will not be denied its benefits.

It is not only in the area of access that the government involvement has been felt. As Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti (1980) has observed, it was the federal financial support during the 1960s and 1970s that transformed the nation's major research universities into centers for federally sponsored research, an action necessary to meet the Russian challenge. Giamatti believes that this public policy of assisting the colleges has resulted in "massive good" (p. 63). Federal funds also have promoted the arts and humanities and the study of foreign languages and cultures and have made possible the construction of many academic buildings and student residence halls.

Federal Aid and the Growth of Regulation

Federal Circuit Court Judge Harry T. Edwards (1980, p. 45), also a legal scholar and instructor at Harvard, has noted that the federal government has helped to keep American higher education financially sound. In 1978, 26 percent of the budget of Harvard, 50 percent of that of MIT, 46 percent of Princeton's, and 17 percent of Michigan's budget came from Washington. Edwards cites the study by the Sloan Commission on Government and Higher Education that indicated that all colleges and universities in America derive between one-eighth and one-sixth of their budgets from the federal government. Yet, federal funding alone does not provide the complete picture. By the late 1970s, at least 39 states were making state funds available

to independent colleges or to the students who attended them (Meinert 1977, p. 75). The combination of federal and state money brings the total public contribution to as much as half the annual operating budgets of many independent institutions, including such prestigious universities as Stanford and Harvard (Moynihan 1980, p. 32). Recognizing that his university was dependent on the public treasury for at least one-third of its budget and "for the sustenance of the intellectual activity of perhaps half of the faculty," former Columbia President William McGill (1977) stated, "Columbia is no longer a truly private university" (p. 134). One wonders about the private status of many institutions. In FY 82 New Jersey spent $10.8 million on state aid to independent institutions, $11.9 million in tuition assistance to their students, and an additional $2 million to fund the Education Opportunity Programs for educationally and economically disadvantaged students at those institutions.

Accompanying the increase in governmental support of public and private institutions has been the increase in government regulation that has burgeoned in the last 30 years. In the 1970s the long arm of Washington reached out to the campus as never before. Two factors account for this: the general increase in the regulation of interstate commerce and the specific increase of federal funds dedicated to higher education—with those funds bringing such requirements as nondiscrimination, affirmative action, and the reporting of project outcomes and financial activity (Bender 1977, pp. 48–49). Even now, when President Reagan pushes to reduce the federal bureaucratic structure, he does so in the context that much governmental oversight is best carried out at the state level. Thus, on the basis of a federal ebb, alone, one might expect an increase in state regulation.

The growth of state regulation of higher education occurred over a 40-year period stretching back to 1940 when only New York provided for the oversight of all of the colleges and universities located within the state's borders. Louis Bender (1977, p. 62) contends that state-level planning and coordination came about as a result of federal pressure to end the struggle among colleges and universities in the 1960s for unbridled development. By 1980 only Wisconsin declined to exercise its constitutional authority over all institutions of higher learning within the state (Kess 1980, p. 19). However, most states have chosen to limit their activity in the academic realm to institutional licensure and to the approval of new degree programs. A 1977 survey of state regulation of independent institutions conducted

by Jung et al. (1977, p. 5) indicated that 30 states had no laws or regulations concerning institutional purpose, governance, and operation; 25 had none concerning course length and content; 28 had none with respect to graduation requirements; and 24 had none regarding faculty qualifications and teaching load or faculty–student ratio.

The Debate Over Regulation

Nevertheless, the debate continues over whether government is too intrusive and burdensome to both private and public colleges alike. As Bender (1977) notes:

> *Much of the literature of higher education during the 1970s contains strong poles of sentiment that portray the difference between those who would champion accountability at the cost of institutional self-determination and those who insist that higher education institutions should be totally immune from any reporting or accountability activities (p. 58).*

One explanation for the controversy is that higher education historically has been relatively free from the complex regulation that has characterized commerce and industry since the founding days of the Republic (Sumberg 1978, p. 76). Thus, it is resisting government activities as would any newly regulated enterprise. A survey undertaken by the Sloan Commission in 1977 gives credence to this argument. It indicated that a significant level of the discomfort felt by academics toward government was a result of the newness of the relationship (i.e., the regulatory relationship) and the natural resistance that accompanies any limitation on independence (Edwards 1980, p. 16).

Many observers and participants agree that the intent of government in higher education, generally to promote a consentual social purpose, has been positive. Yale's Giamatti (1980), for example, has commented that "the intention of regulation by government has been to overcome obstacles set up by those intent on monopolizing the marketplace or on ignoring the legitimate claims to social goods of the citizenry at large" (p. 60). His problems, then, are not with intent but with what he sees as counterproductive implementation. He fears that the manner in which regulation has been carried out "has often effectively prevented that which it was meant to insure" (p. 60). Unfortu-

nately, he concludes that uncontrolled regulation poses a threat to imagination "second only to daytime television" (p. 60).

The Sloan Commission also cited various threats of regulation. A study that it conducted in California indicated that regulation "costs money, stifles creativity and diversity, defeats effective administration, and at its extremes intrudes upon academic freedom" (Kaysen et al. 1980, p. 35). The heavy paperwork requirement is particularly troublesome to many institutions. The Sloan Commission further reported that during 1976 the University of Wisconsin underwent 39 separate audits: 8 by HEW, 1 by the Navy, 8 by the state legislative audit bureau, and 22 by the university's regents (Kaysen at al. 1980, p. 33). Bender and Breuder (1977, p. 17–18) found a similar burden at Brevard Community College in Florida. In a one-month period the institution was required to complete 15 federal forms, 31 state forms, and 9 county forms. Additionally, one Florida Division of Aging training grant required the college to file 60 reports per year. If other institutions have been subjected to what Wisconsin and Brevard were, it is evident why the academy is upset. The prevailing sentiment is that government regulation has proven to be too costly to the institutions, although Edwards (1980, p. 43) contends that the charge has not been substantiated.

The prevailing sentiment is that government regulation has proven to be too costly to the institutions.

Stephen Bailey (1978) once asserted that "higher education by and large will get the kind of government regulation it deserves" (p. 109). In that context, several decades ago Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, in his *Sweazy* opinion, set forth the parameters for appropriate and, thus, maximum regulation in higher education. He cited four essential freedoms in need of protection: the liberty to decide "on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it should be taught and who may be admitted to study." He concluded that "for society's good, political power must abstain from intrusion into this activity of freedom, except for reasons that are exigent and obviously compelling" (*Sweazy v. New Hampshire*, 354 U.S. 234 [1957]).

There are those who would contend that any governmental oversight of higher education encroaches upon Frankfurter's "four freedoms." For example, Young (1977) posits that state activity to promote efficiency in higher education works against pluralism: "a systems approach to higher education cannot be built upon efficiency alone without degrading it" (p. 33). He continued:

Higher education is an incredibly important resource to America. To dilute its excellence, to restrict its academic freedom and freedom of inquiry, to undermine its financial or moral support or to burden it with increased control will result in long term damage to both the institutions of higher education and to society (p. 35).

A decade earlier, the AAUP stated its concern similarly:

The integrity of the educational process can be endangered when an institution's policies and programs. . . are subjected to undue and misguided pressures from the local and national community, from legislative bodies and public officials (Baratz 1978, p. 24).

The policy statement cited the "special threat to the institutional autonomy of public colleges resulting from administrative and budgeting procedures" that have been adopted in the name of efficiency (Baratz 1978, p. 24).

Without Regulation. . .

Charles M. Chambers (1980), COPA's acting president at that time, contended that state licensure itself "must be viewed for what it is—raw governmental regulation" (p. 2). He may be one of the last secular proponents of this extreme point of view regarding state licensure, particularly in reference to its consumer protection role. Most agree that the absence of regulation would be catastrophic. Educators across the county decry the devaluation of the full range of academic degrees as a result of the lax licensure standards of several states, most notably California. Institutions that pass easy licensure tests may never be put to the test of external quality reviews if they never seek accreditation (Harcleroad and Dickey 1975, p. 3). Thus, the academic coinage may suffer in general, since the public could easily become flooded with meaningless degrees. Similar concerns exist regarding the provision of a public license to do business to institutions that do not adhere to standards of fair practice. Gellhorn and Boyer (1978) stated it nicely: "Universities are too important a force in society to escape the contemporary demands for fairness, openness, equality of opportunity, and accountability that are being pressed upon all large and powerful institutions" (p. 28).

Harcleroad and Dickey (1975, p. 2) assert that as early as the end of the nineteenth century there was a visible unevenness in academic quality among American colleges and universities. To establish some order in American higher education the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching sought to differentiate between insitutions that portended to be colleges and those that were really high schools (Riesman 1980, p. 322). Institutions, in order to meet Carnegie's definition of a college (and, thus, qualify for participation in Carnegie's new pension plan for college faculty), were obligated to require entrants to complete four years of precollegiate, high school study. Thus, the "Carnegie Unit" came into being as a measure of the college preparatory nature of secondary school courses, and such courses were removed from the collegiate curriculum. In their stead came college-level arts and science courses.

Similarly, the federal government made an important foray into the effort to upgrade the quality of higher education. In 1910, the United States Office of Education's first specialist in higher education, Kendric C. Babcock, developed a four-level classification of colleges and universities based on the sole standard of the success of an institution's graduates in subsequent master's degree programs. Draft copies of the ratings were circulated for comment. Since only 17 percent of the institutions were included in the highest category, the furor from the remainder was immediate. President William H. Taft was convinced to suppress the list.

The Rise of Voluntary Accreditation

Although the Babcock initiative ended, the Office of Education began in 1917 to publish a list of those institutions that had been licensed by their respective state governments and accredited by the various voluntary accrediting groups (Selden 1960, p. 46–47). This practice, which continues today, gave voluntary accreditation the federal imprimatur and established it as the guardian of acceptable standards of quality.

Voluntary accreditation had its genesis in the joining of institutions of higher education and secondary schools to discuss articulation issues (Harcleroad 1980, p. 6–7). In 1871, faculty from University of Michigan began to visit high schools in the state to determine if these schools were of sufficient quality that their graduates might be admitted to the university without having to pass entrance examinations. These efforts to assess high school excellence provided the basis for accreditation and

led to the establishment of the regional associations who first focused their attention on the secondary schools. The Middle States Association was established in 1887, but it was more than three decades before any regional association implemented accreditation standards for colleges. By 1913, one of these organizations, the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the first to set collegiate standards, had begun to accredit institutions (Young and Chambers 1980, p. 90–91). Over the course of the next four decades, the accreditation activity of the six regional associations grew to the point that all secondary and higher education institutions in all sections of the country were subject to accreditation pressure.

Accreditation and Government

The higher education community has, however, much at stake in the voluntary accreditation process. A strong quality review system maintains the government's reliance on voluntary accreditation. The federal government uses voluntary accreditation as the basis for determining the eligibility of institutions for federal funds; many state governments accept regional accreditation as evidence of meeting the minimum quality standards required for state licensure (Trivett 1976, p. 7).

Finn (cited in Trivett 1976, p. 19), in fact, believes that government has used accreditation to save itself from the task of deciding which colleges should be eligible to receive public funds. In so doing, the government has depoliticized what could have become a partisan political issue and an intrusion on the First Amendment freedoms that Justice Frankfurther cited in *Sweazy*.

The growth of the regional associations in the post-World War II era can be traced directly to the belief that an active, respected voluntary third party is the strongest protection that a college or university might have against government intrusion (Harcleroad 1980b, p. 12). But, the accrediting agencies want to be clear that their role is to serve as a watchdog for quality, rather than to oversee the implementation of public policy. As Robert Kirkwood, the chief executive of the Middle States Association, testified before Congress, any effort "to coopt the accrediting agencies as enforcement arms of the Federal Government, a development which could divert them from their primary function of promoting the improvement of education" would be dangerous since it would undermine the purposes of voluntary accreditation (Bender 1977, p. 51).

Purposes and Principles of Accreditation

Some proponents of voluntary accreditation suggest a strong tie between accreditation and quality. Casey and Harris (1979, p. 21) state that accreditation cannot be relied on to satisfy all accountability concerns; however, it is expected to play a crucial role with regard to quality assurance. This assurance involves two important areas: educational quality and institutional integrity (Young and Chambers 1980, p. 92). Others view accreditation as much more limited in its purpose. Accreditation, as Troutt (1981, p. 45) holds, is essentially an examination of the structure and internal process of an institution as a way to ascertain the existence of educational quality. The Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions, one of the predecessors of COPA, provided a definition of accreditation that is applicable to the current situations. It asserted that accreditation ensures that

> *an institution has clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives, has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected, appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially, and is organized, staffed and supported so that it can be expected to continue to do so (Young and Chambers 1980, p. 91).*

The Middle States Association (1978) puts it more succinctly: the receipt of accreditation "is an expression of confidence in an institution's purposes, performance and resources" (p. 2).

Accreditation standards do not attempt to define educational quality and generally assume the existence of no common benchmarks against which quality might be measured (Troutt 1981, p. 48). Instead, the assessment of a college's quality is based on that institution's own mission and self-definition. As the Middle States Association (1978) states it, "Since Middle States accreditation is based on each institution's appropriate objectives, in no way does it either imply or require standardization. Its meaning has to be interpreted in relation to each institution's goals" (p. 3). Indeed, this scheme has been referred to as "the genius of educational accreditation" (Young and Chambers 1980, p. 90).

This approach requires a college or university to prepare a detailed self-study that has as its base a discussion of mission and purpose. Troutt (1981, p. 46) has found four other elements common to self-studies conducted by institutions in all

six regions: descriptions and analyses of the adequacy of financial resources, of library or learning center holdings, of the faculty, and of the educational program. Additionally, many of the associations require a focus on institutional organization and administration, physical plant, and student services. [Associations make clear their belief that institutions should not rely solely on the self-study. For example, the Middle States Association (1978) tells colleges in its region that "the curricula should be under constant evaluation, with modifications being made as changes in the educational situation require. Provision for this evaluation and the planning which parallel it are essential." (p. 12)].

A recent survey of 286 accreditation team members from five of the six regional associations indicated that they took seriously their role as evaluators of educational quality. Nearly 60 percent (ranging from 47.2 percent in the Southern Association to 70.7 percent in the Middle States Association) viewed the determination of educational quality as an "important" purpose of their on-site visit (Silvers 1982, pp. 2, 5). To make sure that educational quality can be ensured, certain preconditions to the accreditation process must occur. First, in preparation for the visit, the accreditation team must be given ample time to digest the institutional self-study. Second, for it to be useful to the team visit as well as to the institution's future planning, the self-study must fully and accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of the institution and the outstanding issues it is attempting (or failing) to address. Finally, during the visit of the accreditation team, all members of the college community must speak freely and forthrightly if the team members are to draw accurate perceptions of the institution. Accrediting associations take it as accepted fact that candor is "necessary to assure adequate objectivity" (Young and Chambers 1980, p. 93). The Middle States *Policies and Procedures* manual (1978) includes a strong statement in this regard, "The candor of a self-study report is a reflection of an institution's integrity" (p. 38).

Criticisms Regarding the Accreditation Process

Needless to say all self-studies are not candid, and, thus, the accreditation review may be less than valid. Complaints about the accreditation process are long-standing. Babcock's proposed technique of determining institutional quality based on the single criterion of the success of its undergraduates who went on to graduate school was a limited one in concept. Similarly, the

approaches taken by the regional and disciplinary associations—the first of which was the American Medical Association, which undertook its first program review in 1906 (Harcleroad 1980b, p. 7)—were limited in usefulness. According to Selden (1960), in their zeal to counteract the excesses in higher education that were operant at the end of the nineteenth century, the associations "eventually exceeded the bounds of reasonableness and in turn needed to be constrained for [their] excesses and attempts at overstandardization" (p. 29). Generally, the associations took a quantitative approach, basing accreditation on such factors as library size, number of academic departments, size of classes, and per student expenditure (Selden 1960, pp. 40–41). A study of 29 colleges, undertaken in 1928 by Floyd Reeves and John Dale Russell, indicated no substantial correlation between such measures and "what sagacious and knowledgeable observers would agree was educational excellence" (Riesman 1980, p. 330).

Pressure for reform increased, and the accrediting associations were moved to conduct their business in a different manner. The first of the associations to change its approach to accreditation was the North Central Association. In 1934, it began to assess each institution, not according to arbitrary quantitative standards, but "in terms of the purposes it seeks to serve." This new departure was intended to make the association "less and less a policing body" and to provide for external stimulation to the colleges for their continual growth and improvement (Selden 1960, p. 41).

Criticism of accreditation from within the higher education community remained. Speaking before representatives of the various accrediting groups in 1939, Samuel P. Capen, chancellor of the University of Buffalo, referred to the accrediting associations as "the seven devils," and warned,

> *the American universities gave the standardizing agencies license to live. Whenever the leaders of the universities are ready to unite in the decision that these agencies shall live no longer, they will disappear. I think that day approaches (Selden 1960, p. 3).*

Although the accrediting associations have outlived Capen and his warning, the controversy surrounding them has continued to come from both educators and government. For example, visitation teams frequently complain that institutions do not

engage in hard-hitting self-appraisal. Semrow (1977) contends that, "self-studies that are evaluative in nature are the exception rather than the rule" (p. 4). The reason for this is evident: if self-studies are to serve as the basis for the accreditation review, then to point out problems to the visitation team that it might otherwise overlook is, at a minimum, a flirtation with public embarrassment and, at a maximum, an invitation for accreditation denial. To guard against this, many of the findings of the visitation team generally are kept confidential, and it is left to the institution to reveal whatever it wants, if anything, from the evaluation report. Thus, the public, including current and prospective students as well as the faculty, may never learn of serious institutional deficiencies cited in the report.

As has been noted by New Jersey Chancellor of Higher Education, T. Edward Hollander (1981), the body within the regional association responsible for reviewing the report of the visitation team "is comprised of people from the same institutions which are being evaluated and judged" (p. 5). This circumstance is in counterposition to the accepted "principle of disinterested lay oversight that is the basis of college governance" and "makes it virtually impossible to deny any member institution reaccreditation" (p. 5). Hollander, in his address before the annual meeting of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, went on to criticize the fact that "the internal operations by which the final report is created for consideration by the Commission are neither secure nor auditable" (p. 5). Noting that accrediting associations are relied on by the public to ensure institutional quality, he concluded that "secrecy, closed membership, and the lack of verifiable procedures are unacceptable ways to carry out a public policy role" (p. 5).

John Folger (1976) cites similar criticisms of the voluntary accreditation process: that it neglects the public in the establishment of standards, and that it "is ineffective in eliminating fraudulent institutions and doesn't provide enough incentive [to institutions] in the average and above average quality range to improve themselves" (p. 17). David Riesman (1980) also criticizes the accrediting associations, particularly in their appraisal of the nation's best institutions. He contends that the visiting teams "waste a good deal of valuable time to find out whether they have remained reputable institutions" (p. 329). He believes, however, that the process for all institutions could be greatly improved if the association did not include "junkateers" and "freeloaders" on visitation teams, and if they pro-

vided training for evaluators and self-study guides for the colleges (pp. 334–35).

Other critics, including Cohen (1974, p. 315), have wondered whether the accreditation process is even designed to accomplish its real objectives. Can one assess institutional quality by examining institutional form, structure, and process? This concern has prompted COPA's Kenneth Young and Charles Chambers (1980) to respond that "at best, quality is an elusive concept; and accreditation. . . has never claimed that lack of accreditation signified lack of acceptable quality" (p. 89).

One would suspect, however, that the average members of the public would have more questions regarding the quality of unaccredited institutions than they would regarding those with full accreditation. It is, in fact, to accreditation that the public and the government alike look for assurances that institutions at least meet minimally desired standards of qualify. As has been discussed, the regional associations base accreditation on an institution's ability to carry out its own objectives. But as Dressel (1971, p. 278) has pointed out, it is an arduous task to make such a determination since it may be difficult to acquire sufficient evidence to demonstrate the accomplishmen' of institutional goals.

Troutt (1981, pp. 49, 54–57) is even stronger in his criticism. In none of the five areas of inquiry common to accreditation reviews in all six regions are there any firm data to demonstrate that accreditation standards provide evidence of educational quality. On the relationship of institutional goals to quality, he found no existing research to support such a claim and only two studies that in the slightest way showed any relationship between institutional pu.pose and quality. To the standard that academic programs must have a congruence with institutional mission and must contain adequate general education, he found a lack of research to indicate any relationship between academic program differences and student achievement. Similarly, Troutt found inconclusive evidence to support the standard that an institution must have the financial stability to accomplish its goals. Here, he cited studies by Astin (1968) and Rock, Centra, and Linn (1970). The former found that a high per-student expenditure did not appear to correlate with student achievement. The latter group found only a small relationship between student achievement and the amount of money that colleges collect per student, but no correlation between achievement and expenditures per student. Regarding the stan-

Accreditation is not on the mark if it does not include student achievement or outcomes as a major indicator of institutional quality.

dards concerning faculty qualifications, Troutt found conflicting research on the relationship between educational quality and faculty qualifications. Finally, he cited Nichols (1964); Astin (1968); and Rock, Centra, and Linn (1970) to indicate that there is no relationship between differences in library holdings and student achievement. He concluded that the standards of the regional accrediting associations rest on a "frail empirical basis" (p. 57). Cohen (1974, p. 316) agrees with what seems to be one of the thrusts of Troutt's argument: that accreditation is not on the mark if it does not include student achievement or outcomes as a major indicator of institutional quality.

But, even if the accreditation process had been flawless, the periodic nature of accreditation association reviews (often as long as 10 years between visits) would allow many serious institutional problems to go undetected for too long a time (Lierheimer 1979, p. 14). As has been discussed, the process has not been flawless; accrediting associations generally have not carried out the rigorous sort of review process that provides convincing data to assure government officials and the public, alike, that tax dollars made available for higher education produce a high quality product.

Problems with accreditation have not gone unnoticed by the higher education community. In the fall of 1980, presidents from 14 prestigious colleges and heads of several national organizations threatened to withdraw from COPA unless it convened a national commission to study its role in the accreditation crisis. The special panel that subsequently was appointed recommended the redirection of COPA to reflect "the role of accreditation as the academic community's major means of self-regulation and as an important means of quality assessment and quality enhancement" in higher education (Jacobson 1981).

But, if the accrediting associations fall short of ensuring academic quality, who will ensure that the funds from our strained public coffers are being well spent? It is not likely, given their current posture, that the colleges are to be believed about their own levels of quality. In the spring of 1982, John W. Minter and Howard R. Bowen published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* a series of four articles concerning current trends in American higher education; the third in the series (May 26, 1982) addressed the issue of institutional quality. Their survey of chief academic affairs officers and chief student affairs officers indicated that these respondents believed that "the rigor and quality of education are increasing" (p. 8). More than one-third thought that the assessment of student performance had become more rigorous; more than one-half felt that it had remained stable. Nearly one-third thought that the rigor of academic standards had increased; well over one-half felt that it had remained stable. Forty-eight percent of all presidents responding from public colleges and universities felt that their institutions were "gaining ground" in total academic condition (p. 10); as many as 72 percent of the presidents of the public research and Ph.D.-granting universities felt similarly. Only 11 percent of the public presidents saw their institutions slipping in academic quality. At the private colleges and universities, 62 percent of the presidents felt their institutions were advancing in academic condition, and only two percent acknowledged that they were losing ground.

Although it is certainly true that the glut of doctorally trained persons in many areas has given colleges and universities the opportunity to change the profile of their faculty, other trends seem to counter the optimism of the administrators surveyed by Minter and Bowen. In other forums, particularly when governors and legislatures are engaged in the process of putting the

next fiscal year's appropriation into law, presidents claim that the lack of growth of budgets in real dollars is having a serious negative effect on quality.

According to Casey and Harris (1979), the public, seeing declines in test scores, inflated grades, and expanding remedial programs, "apparently believes the quality of higher education has seriously eroded" (p. 6). Some fear that colleges have sacrificed education standards in order to maximize enrollment (Bogue 1980, p. 72). George Weathersby (1978), former Harvard professor and current commissioner of higher education in Indiana, states the concern well: "Declining test scores, charges of irrelevant curriculum, and graduates who are barely literate or numerate—all attained at increasing cost—raise questions about the substantive learning in our institutions" (p. 21). Additionally, federal statistics indicate that there has been a sharp shift from the use of full-time to part-time faculty who now make up about one-third of the teaching force in higher education (National Center for Educational Statistics 1980, p. 106); this trend, which has been reported widely in the press (Maeroff 1980), contributes to a decreasing public confidence regarding institutional quality. Such concerns come at a time when one-third of all institutions are already "somewhat unhealthy" and another 14.4 percent are even worse off financially (Lupton, Augenblick, and Heyison 1976, p. 23).

To make things worse, only one out of three voting adults currently has children in the public schools (Hodgkinson 1979, p. 129). Thus, beyond what has been publicized in the media, the average person now understands that the declining enrollments in the elementary and secondary schools must eventually reach the colleges. The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education (1980, pp. 37, 45, 47) put it dramatically: by 1997, the 18- to 24-year old cohort will be 23.3 percent smaller than it was in 1978; the undergraduate population in our colleges will decline by about 15 percent and, in 1997, will equal that of 1971. With our population getting older and the numbers of traditionally aged students declining—and with a public concerned about faltering standards—it is likely that the traditional support for education and higher education will decrease while that for health care and aid to the elderly will increase. (That is, of course, unless a growing sense of national urgency to transform our society into one based on high technology returns the educational enterprise to its former lofty mount. If this does occur, it will be because government has

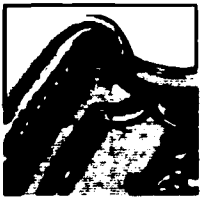
once again sought to meet a compelling national need. This supports the contention of Marcus and Hollander [1981, p. 24] that it is not government interest, but the currently increasing disinterest of government, that causes the greatest threat to higher education.)

Executive and Legislative Activity

Casey and Harris (1979) lament that much of the response of higher education to increasing pressures for greater accountability has been "defensive and/or negative in nature" (p. 7). In a circular way, the "apparent inability or unwillingness of the academy to be responsive to legitimate government concerns and questions" (p. 19) has led the legislative and executive branches to increase their profile on campus. A study by the Education Commission of the States (1977, pp. 11–14) indicates that the increased concern for accountability has taken the form of performance budgeting, performance auditing, state review of new and existing academic programs, and fiscal auditing, as well as the establishment of minimum competency standards for graduates. Critics of these approaches believe that they do not get to the heart of institutional worth but focus on "what is easy to measure and apparently easy to interpret" (George and Braskamp 1978, p. 351). There is, they believe, often an assumption of the regulators that educational success is quantifiable and that educational failure is the fault of the college and not of the student (Schotten and Knight 1977, p. 382).

Nevertheless, such approaches are increasing and are reaching beyond the spheres of planning and coordination. In 1970, no state legislature thought that the evaluation of program effectiveness was important enough to warrant a full-time staff with such responsibilities. Only four years later, more than a dozen had full-time staffs for this purpose (Casey and Harris 1979, p. 16). A 1975 study of 17 states revealed that executive or legislative audits of college academic programs had occurred in 11 states (Bogue 1980, p. 71). Another study revealed that the postauditing of collegiate programs by the state auditor could be found in 36 states. Two years later the legislatures in at least 20 states were conducting program audits (Berdahl 1977, p. 36). In addition, activity just short of performance audits has begun in Nebraska (Bogue 1980, p. 79). Further, Peterson et al. (1977, pp. 3–4) determined that six states used outcome measures in higher education budgeting and that 10 additional states plus the District of Columbia were attempting

to use indicators of performance as part of their budgetary process. Finally, legislative studies regarding the coordination and governance of higher education in Mississippi, North Carolina, West Virginia, and Florida were in process during 1979.



Such governmental activity has not come without resistance from the academy. For example, in 1975 when the Legislative Audit Bureau attempted to review the University of Wisconsin, the university's board of regents challenged the legal standing of the legislature to undertake a program review. The regents feared that an appraisal of program quality could not be undertaken without a review of individual courses and faculty members. They wondered how the Legislative Audit Bureau would gain the competence to evaluate collegiate programs. The political pressures brought to bear by the university resulted in a compromise that changed the focus of the review from a program evaluation to a management review, from a focus on academic programs to a focus on the process of planning and evaluation at the university (Berdahl 1977, pp. 42, 47). Similarly, the Idaho legislature shifted its activity from reviewing academic programs to undertaking management audits (Berdahl 1977, p. 63).

In other states, it has not been the academy that has prevailed. In Virginia, for example, a legislative audit of the Virginia community colleges was extensive. It applied certain outcome measures to each academic program and concluded that there was "mixed favorable and unfavorable performance. . . at some unnecessary cost in public resources" (Berdahl 1977, p. 50). The outcome measures used for transfer programs included the rate of completion within two years, rate and ease of transfer to senior institutions, grade point average and graduation rate of community college graduates at the four-year institutions, program costs, and faculty productivity. For vocational programs, rate of employment and relevance of the curriculum to employment were examined instead of performance at the transfer institution (Berdahl 1977, p. 53).

In a similar fashion, a number of states have begun to make budgeting decisions based on outcome measures. According to Peterson et al. (1977) the characteristics of performance budgeting include a comparison of "outcome ratios, impact ratios and input/output ratios with the desired level of performance" (p. 3) as well as "an analytic procedure for clarifying how resources. . . .are related to outcomes (or impacts) and a means of communicating that information to budgetary decision mak-

ers" (p. 3). Among the measures of performance used are instructional cost per degree, average time to complete a degree, average gain on standardized tests (from entry to graduation), and cost of averge gain on the standardized tests. Additionally, data regarding the completion rates of entering students are also included (Peterson et al. 1977, pp. 5, 7).

Although observers such as Brandl (1980) are accurate when they point out that legislatures treat evaluations with a certain skepticism ("the true does not determine the good" [p. 42], particularly when there are many competing goods), and generally believe that they should carry out the wishes of their constituents regardless of what evaluations indicate, evaluations undertaken by legislative staffs are more likely to be accepted by legislators than evaluations conducted by educators. This is particularly true given the growing tendency on the part of legislators to distrust self-regulated groups (such as physicians and other professionals) since their evaluations historically have been used more to the benefit of the profession than of the public (Folger 1976, p. 5). Thus, the warning of Pingree, Murphy, and Witherspoon (cited in Berdahl 1977) rings true: unless higher education begins to demonstrate that it is rigorously evaluating its activity, is providing useful reports of those reviews, and is making appropriate institutional adjustments, "state legislatures may well attempt to impose various sanctions, such as eliminating or drastically reducing programs which do not exhibit positive effects" (p. 38).

Increased Roles for State Coordinating Agencies

Such a possibility certainly must have been on the minds of the members of the Task Force on the Accountability of Higher Education to the State of the Education Commission of the States (1979, pp. 4–5), which recommended that states establish procedures for the periodic review of institutional progress toward state goals. It noted that "accreditation serves institutional and national purposes that are separate from accountability to the state" (p. 5); thus, accreditation cannot be a substitute for a state accountability policy, which should include public disclosure of the results of the assessment. Since state boards of higher education were "established to provide some measured distance between the academy and government" (Marcus and Hollander 1981, p. 26), it is reasonable for them to oversee this assessment process. David Riesman (1980) agrees that state action has an advantage over federal action be-

cause of the state's proximity to the institutions. He does, however, worry "that the states are unevenly equipped" (p. 369) to fulfill such a role.

The Sloan Commission, with only one dissenting opinion, concurred that each state should make periodic quality reviews of all public institutions and should use these reviews as a basis for budget allocations. Although the commission urged private institutions to participate voluntarily, one member, William Friday, president of the University of North Carolina, felt that in order to be held accountable for public funds and in order to provide for effective state coordination, private institutions should be compelled to participate in the state's review of academic programs (Kaysen et al. 1980, pp. 23, 26, 36–37). The Education Commission of the States (1977) agrees with Friday. Its Task Force on State Policy and Independent Higher Education concluded that "the evaluation of program duplication, quality and outcomes should apply equally to public and independent sectors" (p. 17), particularly in those instances where state money is made available to meet a state interest.

According to some views, the drive toward state action is inevitable. Barak and Berdahl (1978, pp. 2–4) believe that colleges have "rarely. . . seriously reordered priorities or undertaken any kind of extensive program evaluation" (p. 3). They cite a study conducted by Lyman Glenny for the Carnegie Council that indicated that nearly 1,000 administrators believed that leveling enrollments and funding were injurious to program quality since they resulted in reductions in course offerings, faculty, library and equipment acquisitions, experimentation, etc. Their comments, however, were based more on rhetoric than fact since only three percent of their institutions had engaged in "extensive" program elimination or consolidation, and only 27 percent had done so to "some" extent. To support their case even further, Barak and Berdahl point to David Breneman's study on behalf of the National Board on Graduation Education, which concluded that despite the dry labor market for arts and science graduate degree holders, there is "little evidence of leadership on the part of graduate faculty or administrators in pressing for a reexamination of the goals and purposes of the various graduate programs" (p. 4). The Southern Regional Education Board (1977, p. 1) found that in the first portion of the 1970s 122 new doctoral programs were established in the South, threatening the quality of existing programs and aggravating the oversupply of Ph.D.'s. They conclude that

"academic planning must include the review of existing programs for the dual purpose of developing quality programs and termination of ineffective and unproductive programs" (p. 3). Philip Marcus (1973) does not think that this is possible within the institutional context since he believes that

> *in order to accomplish the mundane chores of integrating courses into programs, easing time-consuming hostilities, attending to such undesirable tasks as admissions and library committees, time scheduling, and the like, a tacit understanding arose among faculty to not exercise peer control, not censure, and not deprive others of available rewards and facilities (p. 4).*

Into the vacuum, then, stepped the state coordinating boards and agencies. A 1978 survey of state higher education officials conducted by the Association of American Colleges revealed that they ranked program review as their fifth highest priority (it was 10th the preceding year) ahead of such matters as capital outlay, enrollments, and faculty salaries (Harcleroad 1980b, pp. 16–17). The number of states with statutory authority to review existing academic programs has been growing. The Education Commission of the States (1980, pp. 266–73) reports that in 1979 11 state agencies had authority to review existing academic programs and to make recommendations to the institutions; another 26 had authority to approve the continuation of existing programs. Further, 17 states provide their state boards with explicit authority to accredit the institutions operating within the state (Harcleroad 1980a, p. 1). The legal basis for the review of academic programs by state agencies varies. In some states, the authority comes from statute. In New York, for example, this authority includes both public and independent institutions. In other states, New Mexico, for example, program review evolved from the exercise of budgetary authority (Barak 1977, p. 75).

Barak and Berdahl (1978, p. 55) found that approximately 20 state higher education agencies actually used their statutory authority to conduct program reviews. A 1976 survey conducted by the South Carolina Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education indicated that at least 23 states were involved in the review of existing programs at community colleges (Day and Bender 1976, pp. 5, 25–34). Other states have

been reluctant to exercise their authority for the sake of harmony with the colleges; not so in New York, the leader in state program review. Efforts there began in 1973 when the board of regents sought to review history and chemistry doctoral programs across the state. A law suit was brought by the State University of New York that contended that it was not appropriate for the regents to exercise program review authority. That review process resulted in the recommendation that the chemistry programs at Yeshiva, Adelphi, and St. John's and the history programs at SUNY-Albany and St. John's be decertified. Additionally, five chemistry and two history programs were given three-year probations. In 1977, the state's supreme court ruled in favor of the regents (Barak 1977, p. 82–86). New York did not stop with history and chemistry, and the controversy about the practice has not truly abated.

Similar activity has occurred elsewhere. Bogue (1980, pp. 73–78) reports on state efforts in Tennessee, Louisiana, and Washington. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission undertook a study of "low-producing" programs that resulted in the termination of 35 of them. It also engaged in a "Performance Funding Project" that used more than 20 standard assessment instruments as a generator of a portion of institutional budgets: the better the evaluation, the greater the funding. The Louisiana Board of Regents began a review of all doctoral programs in 1975. Over the course of four years, more than 100 programs had been inspected and 20 had been terminated. Between 1970 and 1973 the Washington Council for Postsecondary Education eliminated some 50 programs because of "chronic low productivity" (p. 77); 30 masters' programs and four doctoral programs were terminated to remedy unnecessary duplication. Peterson et al. (1977, p. 25) have noted that all graduate programs in Washington were reviewed twice between 1970 and 1977 and that the Washington Council had plans underway to review all noncore, duplicative undergraduate programs.

Barak and Berdahl (1978) point out that as the state coordinating agencies have garnered expanded responsibility in recent decades, "the program review function has emerged from relative obscurity to an important role in the coordination and planning of higher education" (p. 10). They are not alone in their belief that the interest of public officials in accountability beyond the financial realm to the performance of academic programs will, in all likelihood, increase (Folger 1977, p. 91).

Alternatives to State Activity

To promote confidence in the quality of college and university programs, Harcleroad and Dickey (1975, pp. 13–15, 19–20) proposed that accounting principles and auditing standards be applied to higher education that are similar to those required of business and industry by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). An analogous group for higher education could develop standards of auditing dealing with factors such as relevance, verifiability, freedom from bias, and quantifiability. Not only finances but also educational outcomes would be included in the audit, and a report similar to that of a corporate annual statement would be produced. A year later, Harcleroad (1976, p. 18) proposed that this auditing approach be tied to regional accreditation.

The SEC approach has not been advanced by many as an effective alternative. Two possible reasons come to mind. First, the regional associations are reluctant to undertake the task of enforcing public policy. Second, the establishment of an organization similar in power and authority to the SEC must certainly evoke in the academy the ever-present fear of Washington. Thus, responsibility for ensuring academic excellence probably will remain with the states.

The answer to an increased governmental role could lie in the increasing pressure placed by government on colleges and universities "to study their own internal processes, to manage more efficiently their institutional resources, and to make available for public inspection various indices of performance or program effectiveness" (Fincher 1978, p. 64). As Smith (1980) puts it, if colleges and universities are to be relieved of the spectre of intervention by the state, they must strengthen their own evaluation activities. He concludes that "appropriate accountability becomes the price of freedom" (p. 57). The Education Commission of the States (1979) contends that available evidence supports the belief that both "institutional diversity and achievement of state education goals can be facilitated by assigning responsibility to institutions and holding them accountable for achieving state objectives" (p. 1).

Such activity is beginning to occur, albeit unevenly. Clark's (1977, p. 3) survey of 454 university graduate department heads in 80 different disciplines from more than 120 institutions indicated that about two-thirds had conducted a departmental self-study within the preceding three years (although about one-third of these reviews were requested by an agency

If colleges and universities are to be relieved of the spectre of intervention by the state, they must strengthen their own evaluation activities.

external to the university). A 1980 survey undertaken by Engdahl and Barak (pp. 123, 139, 145) on behalf of the Western Interstate Council on Higher Education (WICHE) and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) was similarly encouraging. Of 494 institutions in the 13 WICHE member states, 193 reported having institutional program review procedures. The larger four-year public colleges and universities tended to have the most active programs. Unfortunately, in the community colleges, such institutional activity was generally confined to vocational education programs, often in response to grant requirements.

COPA's Young and Chambers (1980) see higher education moving into a period "when instititions, for their own purposes (survival) as well as for socially induced reasons (accountability, consumer information) will engage in a continuing process of self-evaluation" (p. 98). But, as Casey and Harris (1979, p. 24) point out, the academic territory will not be protected from government by a reliance on self-regulation unless it takes seriously the challenge to become internally self-critical. Probably, too, that self-criticism would need to be subject to the scrutiny of external (peer) evaluators, and some version of institutional and consultants' reports would need to be made public. Russell (1978, pp. 521–22) reminds us that responsibility for such reviews should be placed with the institution's board of trustees who provide firm direction and consistent leadership that will demonstrate the institution's commitment to achieve its educational goals. The institution could then "begin to establish control over its own destiny" (p. 522).

The New Jersey Board of Higher Education (1981) ventured into this area in its most recent *Statewide Plan for Higher Education* when it stated that institutional "emphasis should shift toward maintaining and improving program quality through the establishment and implementation of procedures for the regular review of existing academic programs" (p. 97). Sensitive to concerns regarding academic freedom and institutional autonomy, the board stated that "the responsibility for establishing the procedures and for carrying out the reviews and implementing their recommendations shall remain with the respective institutions" (p. 99). Nevertheless, it called on each institution to "develop procedures for the regular review of their undergraduate curricula and testing requirements" (p. 97) in order to ensure that students are being adequately prepared. Further, it expected institutions to incorporate into their review process

"an evaluation of all the important aspects of the program," a focus "directed toward educational quality, evaluated in terms of appropriate program results," an identification of both strengths and weaknesses with "specific recommendations for changes. . . where necessary" (p. 98). Finally, rather than asking to receive copies of the evaluation reports, the board directed that they "be provided to the institution's president and governing board" (p. 99). Institutional responsiveness to this board initiative is reported to the board's budget committee as it formulates its budget recommendations.

Thus, in New Jersey, the state coordinating board has attempted to place responsibility for institutional quality and the review of existing programs squarely with the institutions themselves. Their approach did not follow the same route as their neighbor to the north, New York, which, as has been mentioned earlier, conducts statewide reviews of programs on a discipline-by-discipline basis. If the New Jersey approach does not produce the intended results, one could expect that state and others to move toward the New York model. Certainly, colleges and universities would favor the former approach as being the less intrusive and less threatening of the two.

ENSURING ACADEMIC QUALITY THROUGH SELF-REGULATION

As we have discussed, government, the public, and those educators concerned about the continuing worth of college degrees are crying out for institutions to demonstrate greater accountability regarding the quality of their offerings. In the post-sputnik years of higher education growth, accountability meant something a bit different than it means today. Institutions were receiving new money, accommodating new students, adding new departments, and constructing new buildings at a pace that was more rapid than had ever occurred. For a college or university to be accountable during that period required it to have an adequate planning process so that the growth would be managed and would provide maximum educational advantage.

Good academic planning systems included a number of checks for administrations and faculty. Such systems had at their center an analysis of the institution's historical performance and an inventory of the programs that it currently offered. As part of the process of clarifying institutional mission and goals, future societal needs were forecast and long-range objectives were developed to close any gap between the projected needs and current programs. A strategy for institutional change was established. Specific plans were drawn, faculty and staff were energized, and budgets were focused toward the new goals. Finally, the implementation was closely monitored, and modifications in goal or design were made as required (Sizer 1979, pp. 52–53; Berquist and Shoemaker 1976, pp. 3–4).

But it was not long before accountability demanded more of an institution than merely having an effective planning process, particularly when it became apparent that individual planning had resulted in most institutions adding the same new programs and developing in the same general direction. As public dollars became more scarce, public officials began to take a more active central planning posture and came to view institutional accountability as requiring an evaluation of outcome. Higher education was supposed to provide a number of benefits to society: it was intended to create new knowledge and technology; to provide an educated employment force; to increase incomes (and thereby to make possible decreases in crime and welfare); to enhance the quality of social, political, and cultural life; and to enlighten attitudes and values (Dressel 1976, p. 76). The question came to be, not whether the institutions had properly planned to provide appropriate offerings, but whether they were, in fact, accomplishing those goals.

Approaching Evaluation

To answer the question requires that an institution have an effective evaluation system—one that focuses on program quality. Such approaches as financial auditing programs, survey research, and analyses of cost effectiveness and cost benefit are important public accountability measures; but they fall short of evaluation as demanded here (Kelly and Johnston 1980, pp. 59–60). Similarly, one cannot make judgments about program effectiveness merely by certifying the individual competence of the faculty (and vice versa) (Fincher 1973, p. 15). Cronbach (1980) defines *evaluation* as a "systematic examination of events occurring in and consequent on a contemporary program—an examination conducted to assist in improving this program and other programs having the same general purpose" (p. 14).

Although such an exercise would seem to be well within the ability of scholars accustomed to examining research questions in their own speciality, it often has proven to be a task fraught with difficulty. According to Kells (1981),

> *neither campus leaders nor other professionals—at least those drafted into service in assessment efforts—have a clear sense of how to go about their task. They have neither a usable theory nor a model which they call forth to be the basis of the effort, nor do they seem to have a reasonable level of technical expertise. They flounder searching for a system (p. 19).*

(One must suspect that Kells was referring most specifically to the assessment[1] of academic and other student development programs since such institutional efforts as the effectiveness of the financial aid program, the physical plant maintenance program, the dining hall program, and the like are readily assessable.)

It could be this confusion that led the Phi Delta Kappa Study Committee on Evaluation to conclude over a decade ago that evaluation is not a "healthy science, operating from a base of

[1]According to Fincher (1978, p. 69), "program review" is often taken to mean a review of academic programs initiated and undertaken by a state agency, and "program assessment" is taken to mean a review of academic programs initiated and undertaken at the campus level. Our usage of both terms is intended to be consistent with this practice.

well-established theory and methodology, and with obvious benefits for all" (Fincher 1973, p. 8). They attempted to begin to put some order into the situation by providing a decision-making orientation to evaluation by defining it as "the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives" (Fincher 1973, p. 8).

This focus on the purpose of evaluation as a means for decision making has become universally accepted. The *Encyclopedia of Educational Evaluation* (Anderson and Associates 1975, pp. 136–40) notes that "the primary purpose of evaluating an education or training program is to provide information for decisions about the program" (p. 136). Such decisions should be based on the long-range and short-range program goals and should be useful for program improvement as well as for program termination, if appropriate. Kelly and Johnston (1980, p. 60) state that the basis for assessment activity is to provide information useful for decisions regarding program duplication and underproductive programs as well as to ensure that program goals are being worked toward in the most effective and efficient manner. Most institutions engaged in academic assessment activity do, in fact, use this information as a basis for institutional planning and budgetary decisions (Engdahl and Barak 1980, p. 147).

Dressel (1976, pp. 313–15) sees the evaluation of curricular efforts somewhat more specifically: (1) it should seek a historical and philosophical validation of program goals; (2) it should seek to determine the alignment between the program rationale and desired outcomes; (3) it should examine quality indicators; and (4) it should seek to determine whether the societal consciousness of students has been increased and internalized.

The emphasis on decision making could have an unintended negative effect, however, fear Romney, Bogen, and Micek (1979), who worry that it might make the institution more rigid: "Eyes fixed only upon the accomplishment of a given set of measurable institutional goals may become obdurate to change, to options or to alternate courses of action" (p. 83). Kells (1981, pp. 20–21) counters that the effectiveness of the assessment effort is usually a factor of the motivation that drives it. One might conclude from Kells that an assessment that is people-oriented in its approach would be able to overcome hollow compliance with accountability measures. Baugher (1981, p. 102) goes further. He believes it is crucial to convince faculty and staff that the long-term health and sur-

vival of the institution depends highly on the use of evaluative data to identify and solve existent problems. Such an impelling consideration surely would be sufficient to broaden, among that committed core of faculty who exist in every program at every institution, the focus from the narrow accomplishment of measurable, perhaps modest, goals to the grander, less definable quest for academic excellence.

Beyond this, if evaluation is to be the "healthy science" that Phi Delta Kappa and others would have it be, it needs more than lofty purposes. It needs a solid theoretical and methodological framework. Few have contributed as much to this effort as has Paul Dressel (1976, pp. 8–9) who, for example, believes that "evaluation captures the very essence of education" (p. 9). It begins with identifying and examining the values inherent in the program to be reviewed. Next, the program's goals, objectives, and purposes must be formulated or clarified. Agreement must be reached regarding a set of criteria to measure advancement toward those goals. Appropriate data must then be collected and analyzed. The extent to which the goals have been met must be determined. As a check, the evaluation must seek to determine the relationship between the experience of the student within the program and the outcomes of the program. (For instance, if a major program purports to improve the ability of its graduates to think critically and if the graduates do think more critically than when they entered the program, was this change the result of their experience in major courses or might it be a result of the institution's general education requirements?) Similarly, the assessment should identify any unplanned and undesirable side effects of the program. For the evaluation to have meaning, Dressel contends, it must minimally result in recommendations for change and might extend so far as to recommend discontinuing the program or aspects of it that are no longer needed or are beyond remedial redemption. Finally, a continuing review of the modified program and a continuing review of the evaluation process must be included in an effective evaluation system. Semrow (1977, pp. 15–16) provides a more streamlined framework: first, clarify goals and objectives; second, examine the resources required to accomplish the goals; third, examine alternative ways of meeting the goals; fourth, predict potential problems; fifth, choose the best alternative; sixth, develop and implement a plan around that alternative; finally, critique the process and follow up on recommendations. Most who have written in this

area believe that there is no single approach to evaluation or evaluation methodology that is appropriate for every situation.

Gardner (1977, pp. 573–74, 576, 578, 581, 583) sees five premises on which evaluative activity may be based. First, there is evaluation as professional judgment; this is grounded in the belief that the worth of a program is best determined by an expert in that area. The second premise is evaluation as measurement; this is based on the supposition that what is being attempted by the program can be measured and that measurement tools can either be identified or developed. The third is evaluation as the correspondence between objectives and performance; this approach recognizes that judgments concerning relative success or failure must be made in accordance with that which is being attempted. Fourth is decision-oriented evaluation, an approach based on the belief discussed earlier in this chapter. Fifth is goal-free or responsive evaluation; this approach is the opposite of the third premise of evaluation. It does not base the evaluation on the stated goals but solely on the outcomes.

Evaluations may be formative or summative (Fincher 1973, p. 7). Formative evaluation seeks to identify in the program weaknesses to be overcome and strengths on which greater stress should be placed. It is developmental, intended to improve the effectiveness and operation of the program. Summative evaluation seeks to draw conclusions regarding the worth of the program. Emphasis is on providing data to support program continuance or discontinuance. One would hope, then, that the sort of program assessment that would promote self-regulation would incorporate elements of both approaches; ideally, programs would be strengthened by an assessment, but the process might reveal that the most appropriate decision is program termination.

Evaluations also may have a process or an outcome orientation. A process evaluation, according to Dressel (1976, p. 16), focuses on the manner in which a program operates: it identifies malfunctioning procedures or ineffective implementation of procedures; it scrutinizes the adequacy of internal avenues of communication; it examines the efficient use of resources. This activity leads to recommendations regarding changes in the procedural aspects of the program so that it might become more effective. Outcome evaluation focuses on the program's actual effects. It examines the congruence between program objectives and accomplishments. (Some call this element "discrepancy

evaluation'' [Anderson and Associates 1975, pp. 127–29].) It also identifies unintended results and their causes. Together these features of outcome evaluation permit the adjustment of delivery strategies in order to enhance the likelihood that the program's intended results become reality (Dressel 1976, p. 16). Regarding outcome evaluation of academic programs, Bowen (1980, p. 38) reminds us that crucial to such an effort is an orientation toward personal development, not toward resource use; that all educational goals should be examined, not only the easily testable goals; that the level of growth among a program's students, rather than the ultimate level of attainment by the students, should be most important. An effective program assessment must include both a process and an outcome orientation.

An effective academic program assessment must include both a process and an outcome orientation.

Although there are numerous other approaches to evaluation, many would contend that the best guarantee of educational accountability, one with built-in evaluation features, is the use of performance objectives in academic programs. Such an approach requires the careful designing of course goals, the specifying of appropriate learning techniques, and the determination of measures that would be indicative of adequate mastery. If the standards are sufficiently high, the institution has demonstrated its accountability. If students meet the objectives, they and their faculty have demonstrated their accountability (Blake and Slapar 1972, pp. 5–8). Hobson (1974) cites the belief that a ''good teacher is not the one who flunks 60% of his students. He is one who says that when students finish his course, 90% of them can do the things sought'' (p. 82). Although many would agree with him, not as many would concur that the performance objective approach is the best method for attaining such results or of promoting accountability. This is particularly true in those areas where it is the development of the ability to think critically or to create artistically that is at the heart of the educational exercise. Nonetheless, the performance objective approach bears mention as an accountability measure since it may have evaluative application, particularly for vocational education programs.

Whatever approach to evaluation an institution takes, Kelly and Johnston (1980) remind us that the assessment will be based in significant part ''on the credibility of human judgment'' (p. 75). Nevertheless, it must be theoretically and methodologically sound.

Program Review Participants

Braskamp (1982) stresses the importance of maintaining the credibility of an institution's self-assessment system through the

> *continual involvement of various audiences. . .to obtain their value perspectives and to establish a mutual problem-solving, trusting relationship. . .that facilitates subsequent policy making, program planning, and program implementation (p. 64).*

Faculty everywhere are concerned that assessments of departments or programs might serve as convenient mechanisms for the redirection of resources and funds. However, based on their own experience, Smock and Hake (1977) regard this as a relatively unfounded fear when internal reviews are thorough, complete, and responsible. In their view, "evaluating to enhance quality seldom uncovers significant sums of money that can be better used elsewhere," and might well result in the "allocation of special funds to alleviate needs documented through the self-evaluation" (p. 10). Nevertheless, as Dressel (1976) acknowledges, there is always likely to be a human factor that can be problematic to self-regulatory activity: "Evaluation of an existing unit is always a threat to those involved in it" (p. 408). This is particularly true "since no educational situation has been or is likely to be ideal" (p. 5). One can find fault with aspects of all programs. Those faults can be exaggerated and can become a negative factor in the decisions regarding allocation of resources. Thus, Dressel believes that "evaluation done with or for those invovled in a program is psychologically more acceptable than evaluation done to them" (p. 5). This argues, then, for including in the process those most directly affected by the assessment—if an academic department, the faculty who compose it.

However, Heldman (1976, pp. 8–9) points to a concern of many administrators that faculty alone are incapable of undertaking exacting reviews of their own programs. Braskamp (1982) reports that the University of Nebraska, Lincoln has used committees that included

> *faculty members both internal and external to the University, an academic administrator, a regent, a student, a state legislator, and a representative of the governor. . .to evaluate,*

over a three year period, the progress of the unit toward its agreed-on goals (p. 63).

In Breskamp's view, this system, because of the variety of the participants, not only helped to ensure program quality, it also helped "to improve the credibility of the university by establishing direct communcation between the university and state government and to improve both short and long-term planning" (p. 63).

Generally, however, institutions stay closer to home. Many establish assessment committees that include some program faculty but that extend membership to academic administrators and faculty from other departments (Engdahl and Barak 1980, p. 125). A subgroup, usually made up solely of program faculty, serves as a self-study committee. (More will be stated shortly regarding the self-study approach and assessment procedures.) Dressel (1971) cautions that in order to promote the objectivity of the study it is generally not wise to include on the self-study group faculty "who already have strong and announced convictions on the issues to be studied" (p. 283). He believes it is essential to include on the committee respected members of the program. Smock and Hake (1977) credit the success of efforts at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to the fact that the institutionwide assessment council (a supra assessment group) "draws its membership from mature faculty members whose academic records are exemplary and whose credibility is widely accepted" (p. 69) and in whose judgment and integrity the entire campus community has confidence.

Finally, Dressel (1971) fears that there could be credibility and other problems if the chairperson of the assessment committee is one who is seeking to build his or her reputation at the institution on the basis of leadership of this process. Thus, the process is best served if the self-study committee is chaired by "a person of recognized stature with an already well-established career" (p. 283).

As a means of ensuring an adequate level of objectivity to the assessment process, most institutions engaged in such activity make use of external consultants. Long (1980) points out that beyond their value in providing a fresh view regarding departmental activities, external consultants who have "no vested interest in the outcome of the review" (p. 45) can best make

qualititative judgments that might satisfy the concerns of government.

Since a college or university would be assessing a fifth to a third of its programs each year, the institutional tab for consultants could be rather high. With budgets as strained as they are at present, some colleges are bound to be concerned about the expense of this approach—an average of $500 per program (Engdahl and Barak 1980, p. 125). However, the self-reviewing aspect of the assessement surely must make the external consultant worth the cost.

Beyond cost, there are a few concerns regarding the use of external consultants. It may take them longer to understand the program and its context than it would for campus faculty members from a different department. Also, because of the lack of an ongoing working relationship with them, an outside person may be distrusted by program faculty. However, the benefits of contracting with an external evaluator outweigh the drawbacks since the person selected has no vested interest in the program and is experienced in program review (Miller 1979, pp. 272–73). This approach also occasions the least disruption of the ongoing responsibilities of program faculty and permits them the opportunity for cross-fertilization of their program with the goals and approaches of that from which the consultant comes.

Wise (1980, pp. 13–15) views the consultant as playing four different roles. First, the person is a scientist who studies the program's effects, testing causality between the program and changes among the students. Second, the consultant gathers the information the program needs to make necessary decisions. Third, the evaluator serves as a judge of how well the program meets standards of excellence. Finally, the consultant is a teacher who studies the program in order to assist others in understanding it.

In order to be successful, the external visitor must be able to identify the important aspects of the program as well as the methods for assessing their effect. The ability to present the evaluative data in a comprehensive and useful manner also is a necessary skill, as is the ability to establish quick rapport and influence with the program faculty (Brown 1980, p. 81).

The criteria used by New Jersey for selecting external consultants, when it reviewed the quality of master's programs at the state colleges, provide a good model for colleges and universities conducting their own assessments (Berdahl 1976, p.24). Consultants should: (1) be recognized scholars; (2) be

knowledgeable about the issues and trends in curricula in their field; (3) be able to understand the educational mission of the particular institution; (4) be able to provide constructive suggestions for enhancing the program; (5) not be dogmatic about their own view regarding the discipline or field of study; (6) have no relationship with the institution, members of the program, nor any other institution within the state; (7) not be on the faculty at a university from which a significant proportion of the program faculty received their terminal degree; and (8) not have any entangling obligations that might affect objectivity.

As is done in New York, it is wise to permit departments the opportunity to scrutinize a list of consultants proposed to evaluate their program and to permit them to exclude persons they believe objectionable (Barak and Berdahl 1978, p. 79). Once the program has made its comments, the academic administrator overseeing the review process should select the consultant. Such courtesy relieves a certain level of anxiety in the program and promotes the acceptability of the consultant's report by program faculty.

The Self-Study

As has been noted earlier, the foundation for the assessment should be the self-study, which serves as the focus of the visit of the consultant. Semrow (1977, pp. 12–23) notes that, since institutions differ and the issues confronting academic departments within an institution also may differ, self-studies may be multiform and should serve to enhance any unique attributes of the program. The most frequently used construct is the "context self-study"; it has institutional goals as its core. It is general in nature and seeks to relate intended and actual performance. Further, it identifies unmet needs and suggests unusual opportunites. A "product self-study" also is focused on outcome. Although the context self-study examines the success of the program in meeting institutional goals, the product self-study seeks to measure the extent to which the program has met its own distinctive goals. For example, although the institution may seek to develop in its students the ability to think critically, the program does that by exposing them to the philosophies and theories of the leading thinkers and researchers in the field. The context self-study might examine the extent to which critical thinking has become ingrained in students, and the product self-study might examine the extent to which the

students are learning the subject matter. An "input self-study" takes a "how to" approach regarding the effective utilization of resources to fulfill program intentions. It considers the strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as various strategies to make it more successful and provides a cost-benefit analysis of the preferred approach. A "process self-study" scrutinizes the conduct of the department as it seeks to meet its goals.

Semrow (1977) believes that an institution is best served when the four self-study constructs are used "in a continuous, evaluative cyclical model" (p. 13): context followed by input followed by process followed by product and back again to context. Although we would agree with the spirit of the continuous evaluation model, we also are aware that a department might get so caught up in evaluative and self-reflective activity that it could paralyze itself. Thus, it may be useful to undertake the context evaluation while preparing for the visit of the regional accreditation team (assuming that the associations come every five years) and, if there are no serious and obvious problems in a program, combine the other three evaluative forms as the periodic review of the program.

Dressel (1976, pp. 419–22) holds that effective self-studies are comprehensive and include at least six elements. First is the determination of institutional and programmatic mission, goals, and educational objectives. Second is the measurement of the educational and other outcomes of the program. Third is the assessment of the ability of the curriculum to produce the desired outcomes. Next is the appraisal of the adequacy of program resources and the effectiveness of their deployment to meet program goals. Fifth is the examination of the program's planning and decision-making processes. And, finally, the sixth element is the interpretation of the aforementioned and the identification of strategies to shore up weak points and to enhance strong ones.

Such a design seems to combine the various approaches suggested by Semrow. It also is in keeping with the standards set forth by disciplinary and professional groups seeking to promote high quality programs. The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) (1974, pp. 4–10), for example, requires a nine-part self-study of all institutions desiring to be included among its list of programs that have undertaken self-study activity. The elements of this self-study would be of value to any academic program un-

dertaking a quality review and are discussed here, as follows, for illustrative purposes.

- **Program goals:** Includes a brief history of the program, a discussion of its current purpose and objectives as well as any contemplated changes in this regard, a description of the program's continuing process of self-examination, and an analysis of the extent to which program goals are being met.
- **Organization:** Discusses factors such as departmental structure, internal processes, and personnel practices as well as the authority of the department over personnel and financial matters. The intention of this section is to assess how well the organizational and financial structure of the program promotes its educational goals.
- **Facilities:** In addition to space utilization, discusses library holdings and equipment inventory (including, presumably, access to computers and other telecommunications equipment).
- **Faculty:** Deals primarily with data of a demographic nature: number of faculty; proportion tenured; balance between full-time and adjunct faculty; teaching load information; faculty salaries; and balance among the faculty in terms of rank, degrees, specializations, experience, age, and so forth. Plans for remedying any weaknesses among the faculty and a projection of needs for additional faculty over the coming five-year period are also required.
- **Students:** Discusses such data as enrollment, class size, graduation rate, and placement.
- **Academic program issues:** Discusses the curriculum and identifies areas needing attention and new areas that should be added.
- **Research:** Focuses on departmental research objectives and productivity.
- **Public service:** Inventories the nature and impact of community service activities. (The application of program resources to existent societal needs is important to the fields of public administration and public affairs as well as to many other disciplines and professional fields.)
- **Future plans:** Enumerates and discusses in appropriate detail the department's future plans, including those that result from the self-study.

Anderson and Ball (1978, pp. 38–41) approach the assessment of existing programs somewhat differently. In order to determine whether a program should be continued and, if so, whether it should be expanded, they believe it is necessary to study continuing need, short- and long-term effectiveness of the program in meeting that need, the side effects (both positive and negative) of the program, program cost (in an absolute sense and in relation to alternatives) and cost effectiveness, and the existent demand and support for the program. To contribute to discussions regarding program modification, assessments must be made of the following: program objectives; the content of the program including relevance to program goals and to students served, course sequencing and effectiveness, and general acceptance of the content when compared to professional standards; the curricular methodology; the program's context with reference to administrative structure, established procedures, staff relationships, facilities and finances, and public relations efforts; and personnel practices.

Sources for the Self-Study

NASPAA (1974) requires that input for the self-study come not only from faculty and administration but also "should be obtained from students and outside constituencies of the unit (alumni, other academic departments, interest groups, government agencies, etc.)" (p. 2). Becker (1972) agrees since he believes that "the degree to which a department's course offerings serve the students of other departments. . . as opposed to serving only or primarily its majors" (p. 4) is an important characteristic to be studied. Similarly, the self-study also should focus on how well the department uses what is available from other departments to support its own program.

Opinion may be a useful source of information and should not be discounted as being too subjective or too hard to measure.

Including data from sources other than those involved in the direction and delivery of the program inserts a certain amount of opinion. But, as Baugher (1981, p. 102) asserts, opinion may be a useful source of information and should not be discounted as being too subjective or too hard to measure. For example, studying the views of alumni as part of the self-study may yield surprising evidence. The obvious purpose of this contact is to help determine student satisfaction with the program, but as Plane (1979, pp. 4–5) found out, it can do much more. He reports on an alumni survey regarding those aspects of a college education that are important to future success. Probably, student mastery of course content is of most immedi-

ate concern to the vast majority of faculty. However, in the survey of those who had been graduated for 10, 15, 20, and 25 years, no group ranked technical knowledge as being most important to success. In fact, the more affluent and successful the alumnus, the lower the tendency to rate this aspect as important. What was rated as being most important to each group of alumni was communications skills. The ability to solve problems creatively was close behind as was the skill of acquiring and handling information. Most of us probably would observe that these competencies are often secondary and usually indirect goals of courses and programs.

Quantitative Factors

The current concerns regarding college and university budgets and the internal allocation of resources across the institution have led both institutional and program administration to rely on quantifiable data. Institutional administrators want to know whether programs are cost effective, whether alternative arrangements might result in increased efficiency and effectiveness, whether there is any demonstrable relationship between teaching and learning, and so on. Departments want to be sure that they can demonstrate that there is continuing need and student demand for their program, that the enrollment trend is a positive one, that students graduate and find good jobs, etc., so that they can hold their own in the struggle for faculty lines and financial resources.

Interest in quantifiable and comparable data led the Education Commission of the States (ECS) to set forth a variety of criteria to be considered in the review of existing programs: (1) the number of graduates in each of the last five years; (2) student enrollments and attrition rates; (3) class size and course costs; (4) cost per program graduate; (5) faculty workload; (6) the quality of the program as evidenced by regional and national reputation, qualifications of the faculty, and positions held of program graduates; (7) subsequent professional production by program graduates; (8) economies and improvements in quality that may be made by eliminating or consolidating the program; (9) general student interest and demand trends; and (10) the appropriateness of the program to institutional mission (Barak and Berdahl 1978, p. 68).

(Some of these criteria have benefit beyond program evaluation. For example, the examination of whether there is a continuing societal need for the program has the serendipi-

tous effect in preprofessional and other areas. The surveying of potential job opportunities and skills required for entry into those professions permits adjustment of curriculum to meet current demands, up-to-date advising for students, and recognition of the need for faculty development [Cohen 1974, pp. 318–19].)

Even though approaches such as those suggested by ECS are intended to provide quantitative data useful for decision making, there is no escaping judgment. For example, student attrition data raise the question of whether the retention rate is reasonable. Obviously, as Miller (1979, pp. 42–44) points out, a certain amount of attrition is both inevitable and desirable. Further, the judgment regarding the acceptibility of retention/attrition rates must be appreciative of institutional mission. Since bachelor's degree completion rates vary from 40 to 50 percent at state colleges to 90 to 95 percent at prestigious private universities, it makes sense for a program to compare its graduation rates to those at similar institutions.

Another quantitative area, cost effectiveness, also presents judgmental problems. In asking whether the program is worth the money invested, it must be realized, as Anderson and Associates (1975) claim, that "there are no clear prices for outputs" (p. 93). Even if there were, it is not evident that there is any relationship between cost, cost effectiveness, and educational quality.

Becker (1972, p. 6) fears that evaluations based on such factors as average cost per credit hour will be counterproductive to the goal of educational quality since they will encourage faculty turnover and discourage the practice of rewarding faculty scholarship and service with promotion. Senior faculty have higher salaries but do not generate more credit hours; in fact, they may generate fewer. Thus, the tendency might be for a program to keep a sizable cadre of inexperienced, low-paid faculty with large class enrollments in order to demonstrate its cost effectiveness. Similarly, Sizer (1979) contends that the danger in relying on such short-term indicators as cost per FTE is that sight might be lost of the program's long-term measure of effectiveness, its contribution to meeting societal needs. He believes that "a proper balance has to be struck between the qualitative and quantitative aspects" (p. 71) of performance in order to provide an accurate evaluation of a program.

Qualitative Factors

Clearly, program evaluations cannot escape the discussion of quality. Yet, as Scott (1981) observes, "quality has proven to be an elusive concept" (p. 2) for many academics. He belives that quality is revealed not solely by examining such quantifiable data as the number of Ph.D.'s on the faculty or the number of books in the library nor only by examining the means and methods of a program. Quality also is revealed by assessing the ends, values, appropriateness, and worth of a program. The New York State Department of Education (1981) feels similarly. It believes that the assessment of programmatic quality must be multidimensional, must take into account the mission of the institution, and must include quantifiable data tied to outcome measures. Individually, an institution's characteristics may not provide a reliable indication of quality, but through the amassing of a large number of characteristics, a "relatively reliable picture of the overall status [of quality] can be constructed" (p. 9).

Miller (1979) agrees that a program's quality is a "composite of interdependent elements" (p. 6): goals and objectives, students' learning, faculty performance, and academic programs.

Goals

Much has been stated already about centrality of institutional and programmatic goals and objectives to the assessment of an institution's quality. It is generally agreed, as Caruthers (1980) states, that "when an institution's mission is well established and understood, it creates a frame of reference for assessing program quality" (p. 83). For example, a highly selective college needs to be more concerned about trends in the SAT scores and class rank of its entering students than does an open door college. Also, a doctoral level chemistry program at a research university would be more concerned about the participation of its faculty in the advancement of knowledge than would a small chemistry program with a service function at an institution where teaching is intended to be premiere.

In assessing the extent to which it is accomplishing its overall mission and goals, an institution or department might use tools such as the Educational Testing Service's Institutional Functioning Inventory (IFI), which has been normed using a sample of 37 colleges and universities (Miller 1979, pp. 264–65). The IFI may be used to rate the institution's intellectual-

aesthetic atmosphere, freedom, human diversity, concern for improvement of society, concern for undergraduate learning, democratic governance, meeting of local needs, self-study and planning ability, concern for advancing knowledge, concern for innovation, and institutional esprit. An instrument like the IFI is, of course, not intended to be a substitute for self-reflection, but as a useful aid in that process.

Student Learning

The appraisal of student learning needs to include such earlier discussed measures as graduation rates and placement in first professional job. It should also incorporate the ability of program graduates to gain admission to degree programs at the next level and their ability to graduate from those programs. Standardized tests of subject matter knowledge also might be useful, with absolute score not being as important as relative growth. Performance of students on Graduate Record Examinations, Miller Analogy Tests, tests used for professional school admission, and the like also should be scrutinized. A comparison of grades earned in program courses with those in cognate and general courses as well as with standardized test scores would serve to indicate whether program grades were indicative of learning or whether grade inflation overestimates achievement. In the long run, however, the strongest indicator of student learning is the relative future success of program graduates, hence the desirability of alumni surveys.

Crucial to a student's ability to make the most of the institution's programs is a strong advising and counseling system (Miller 1979, pp. 40–41) since it assists the student in understanding the college's general education philosophy and requirements, the program's requirements, and career opportunities as well as how to maneuver through the college's registration and other procedures. The appraisal of student learning should include a focus on advising, particularly since faculty reward systems usually do not place significant value on advising.

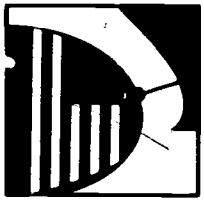
Faculty Performance

Essential to an effective self-study and, thus, to judgments regarding program quality is, according to Dressel (1971, p. 280), the assessment of the quality, morale, and activities of the faculty. Included should be an examination of full-, part-time, and adjunct faculty, including a focus on whether the bal-

ance between these three groups is an appropriate one, given the goals of the program and the concern for excellence.

Institutions that have strong faculty evaluation systems geared toward improved performance have a firm foundation for an assessment of the nature to indicate program quality (Miller 1979, pp. 76–77). Comprehensive, periodic faculty evaluations should include appraisal of teaching; advising; research and publication; and service to the college, community, and profession, as well as grant activity. (A functioning program to remedy individual weaknesses revealed in the evaluation process is a hallmark of a program concerned about quality.) Since the periodic faculty evaluation process generally is limited to faculty who have yet to earn tenure, its existence cannot replace a thorough review of faculty performance as part of the program review.

Added to data such as that serving as the basis for the assessment of an individual faculty member's performance should be teaching load information and background characteristics such as where the highest degree was earned and current affiliations with other institutions, agencies, foundations, corporations, etc. As has been mentioned many times in this monograph, institutional and program goals should serve as the basis for the assessment of those factors. For instance, Bayer (cited in Miller 1979, pp. 89–91) examined five measures of faculty quality: (1) the proportion of program faculty whose highest degrees come from the 12 most prestigious universities in America; (2) the proportion of program faculty who possess the doctorate; (3) the proportion who subscribe to three or more professional journals; (4) the proportion who have published at least one book or article; (5) the proportion whose primary interest lies in research rather than teaching. He found that all five of these quality indicators were negatively correlated with concern for the individual student. Thus, an institution that views itself as a teaching institution or that promotes an image of being a close community might want to emphasize different faculty performance quality indicators. Such characteristics might be more in keeping with those suggested by Miller (1979, pp. 92–94): (1) quality of teaching; (2) ability to retain students; (3) stability of the faculty; (4) professional activities of the faculty; (5) faculty research and publication activity; and (6) vitality of the department, including its ability to be self-critical and its interest in innovation.



Academic Program

The fourth element in assessing program quality is the evaluation of the academic program, a focus on the curriculum and support services. Unfortunately, in 1969 Dressel and DeLisle (cited in Miller 1979, pp. 97–98) found in their study of 322 colleges and universities that attention is paid to quality of instruction, although there is very little consideration of the curriculum. Based, perhaps, on the notion that an analysis of courses offered and course content would be an infringement on academic freedom, this lack of concern about curricular design is shortsighted. If instruction is to be of high quality, it must be directed toward the fulfillment of predetermined departmental goals, something that a coherent curricular model should be designed to do. A review of the collective group of departmental offerings along with cognate requirements from other departments reveals the extent to which the curricular model satisfies the departmental goals.

If it can be demonstrated that individual courses are sufficiently focused on those curricular goals, it is not necessary in an absolute sense for a self-study to examine each course in depth. However, including a content analysis of each course would be added evidence of a departmental concern for excellence. So as to moot any fears about infringing on academic freedom, the content analysis of each course, including a focus on the relevance and quality of the texts and assignments, might be undertaken, not by the self-study committee, but by the individual faculty members.

No study of a department's academic program can be complete without an examination of the general education component that underpins it. This is, obviously, an area that is primarily of institutional concern. However, since the basic intellectual skills and multidisciplinary breadth that general education programs are intended to provide are necessary prerequisites to the completion of a degree in a specific area, the faculty in that area need to be conscious of that aspect of the curriculum as they review the extent to which the academic goals of the department are being met. For example, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the proportion of colleges and universities requiring English of its graduates declined from 90 to 72 per cent. Similarly, those requiring mastery of a foreign language declined from 73 to 53 percent, and those requiring math fell from 33 to 20 percent (Miller 1979, p. 121). At many institutions, required courses were replaced by mandated distribu-

tions that, in turn, were replaced by individually negotiated general education. It has become clear, however, that a structured general education program can best advance institutional goals since it ensures student exposure to those areas that the institution's faculty believes central to one's education.

Although the pendulum has begun to swing in this direction, what to do with general education remains a concern on many campuses. For example, the rapid pace of technological change before us today makes it necessary for public administration graduates to understand the role and application of science and technology to societal problems; it also requires that science graduates have an understanding of ethics. Similarly, it is now evident that business majors need an understanding of the economic interrelatedness of the world's nations as well as an understanding of national cultural differences. The structuring of a general education curriculum so that concerns such as these are met is, of course, something that each institution needs to determine in a manner in keeping with its mission and goals. If the general education program does not enhance the major, then major faculty need to work at the institutional level to seek those modifications that would permit it to become integral to its comprehensive curricular model.

The support services that need to be part of the evaluation of the academic program include: the number, balance, and quality of library holdings that serve the department's individual courses; the inventory and quality of equipment; the accessibility of computers to students and faculty; the quality of laboratory experiences and other experimental and experiential opportunities both on and off campus; the career guidance services provided; and, for vocational and professional programs, success in placing program graduates into appropriate positions.

Evaluating Departmental Evaluation Activity

Finally, one element of program quality is the process by which the program seeks to renew itself. Suchman (cited in Anderson and Associates, 1975, pp. 281–86) has observed that the politics of evaluation often lead to approaching the evaluation in a less than forthright manner. He mentions six frequent distortion techniques: (1) "eye-wash," focusing the evaulation solely on the program's successful elements; (2) "whitewash," covering up the nonfulfillment of goals by avoiding objective assessment; (3) "submarine," promoting power interests to the detriment of the program being evaluated; (4) "posture,"

appearing to be objective but designing the evaluation to advance a favorable image; (5) "postponement," putting off an evaluation in the hope that interest in evaluating will disappear; and (6) "substitution," attempting to move the focus of the evaluation from the floundering core of the program to one of its more successful, though minor, parts.

Tritschler (1981) believes that few institutions have "the confidence for complete candor" when so much is at stake, particularly "when the results may affect lives." However, he contends that if faculty "are wise enough to treat the self-study. . . as a powerful instrument for development of quality in their programs. . . it is more likely to be an honest document" (p. 28). One can readily conclude that a program that is open to evaluation and has a functioning, ongoing effort is one that is concerned with excellence. The self-study should examine the extent to which the program has engaged in true self-assessment activities and has factored the results of those efforts into subsequent program decisions.

Reporting the Results of the Program Evaluation

The external consultant's report, based on a careful review of the self-study and a visit to campus, must make an assessment of the program's overall quality. Program strengths should be recognized and areas of weakness should be identified. Although the consultant can provide some helpful insights to the resolution of problems, it will fall on the institution to initiate any necessary remedial action. Who, beyond the program faculty, is to be privy to the report is, as Anderson and Associates (1975, pp. 130–32) point out, not without controversy, particularly since there are many who believe that academic program review is, in essence, a political process (Kelly and Johnston 1980, p. 59). This belief not only results in such subversions of the evaluation process as have just been discussed, but also in the evaluations, themselves, becoming "like seed sown in thin soil or among thorns, their results undisseminated or confined to a select few, with little in the way of follow-up or utilization" (Anderson and Ball 1978, p. 92). The goal of accountability, then, is not well served if the results of the evaluation are made known only to the program faculty.

One solution is to prepare two evaluation reports, a detailed one for use by program faculty, academic administrators, and institutional decision makers, the other a summary intended for broad distribution (Semrow 1977, p. 19). Many institutions

would find this an acceptable approach. Others, perhaps those that are more confident about the overall level of quality of their programs and reputation of their institution, would choose to follow the model of the University of Chicago; it makes available the reports of external consultants through the University of Chicago *Record*, an official university publication (Miller 1979, p. 272).

Howard Bowen (1980) stated well in a speech before the annual meeting of the Middle States Association, the feelings of good academics regarding the release of evaluative results:

> *I'm not anxious to tell the world how bad my institution is or what its problems are, but if you are to enlist the support of the entire college community in improving an institution, the knowledge of what is happening to outcomes must be shared with the whole community. . . . If these results are kept secret, . . . they don't have any function in developing community effort toward improvement; nor do they do anything for answering the cry for accountability (p. 37).*

Bowen concludes with his belief that "there is very little alternative to being open, as open about this matter as one would be open about explaining the admissions requirements or the financial position of the institution" (p. 37). We agree; for to do any less would result in greater incursion into academic territory by state boards and agencies of higher education as well as by legislative and executive program auditors.

Utilizing Assessment Reports

Obviously, reporting alone does not make an institution accountable for the quality of its academic programs. The results of the assessment activity must be fed back into the system so that the department in question can make the changes necessary to promote academic excellence.

Such has been the practice in Michigan as reported by Munitz and Wright (1980). Michigan State, for example, has established an "Annual Evaluation and Report (AER) system as the principal link between unit planning and resource allocation" (p. 23) at the department level. Consisting primarily of two sections (evaluation and report, and planning and budgeting) the system enables each department to assess its performance in relation to other comparable units of the university regarding instruction, research, and professional activities of the faculty

and to develop plans for the future in the context of overall university goals. It also serves to establish a budget that lists departmental goals in priority order (indentifying the funds and the sources of funds required for each at the same time) and indicates "how the department intends to reserve from long term commitments a marginal percentage of its budget in anticipation of possible future reductions in general fund availability" (p. 25).

The system undertaken by the University of Michigan attempts to incorporate the evaluation, planning, and budgeting elements through a three-step process that arrives at a "Memorandum of Understanding" that "spells out the specific college objectives and plans for their attainment during the next five years" (p. 29). The memorandum incorporates into a single document the essence of "the evaluation plan and schedule; the enrollment and staffing projections; and the anticipated budget needs that accompany these plans and projections" (p. 29).

Clearly such a statement would be reviewed periodically and altered to accommodate new needs or changing circumstances. Munitz and Wright see as one of its values its ability to "be tailored to meet the peculiar circumstances to a specific college or school" (p. 29).

A Concluding Note

The historical interest of government in the activity of higher education has been to encourage development in order to meet obvious social needs. Beyond chartering, licensure, and (more recently) new program approval, government has generally relied on professional associations and voluntary accrediting groups, along with the institutions themselves, for assurance that academic programs are strong. The accountability and consumer movements have called into question this means of ascertaining that institutional standards are sufficiently high. Not only does this occur when taxpayers assert that they cannot afford continued growth in public spending but also at a time when public confidence in higher education is perhaps at its lowest ebb.

Thus, government has begun to make demands of higher education that it has long made of other enterprises that receive public funds—evidence that the outcome justifies the investment. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways: program auditors can be on the payroll of the governor or the legislature; state coordinating boards and agencies can establish pro-

gram review offices or can commission program evaluations; or the institutions themselves can provide the necessary assurances. It is unlikely that regional accreditation, given both the reluctance of the assocation to expand and strengthen their reviews and the 5- to 10-year intervals between reviews, will provide sufficient evidence of public accountability. What will be convincing, however, will be a continuing and rigorous review by individual institutions of the quality of their own programs. Such reviews must be comprehensive, forthright, and decision-oriented, their results must be made public, and the results must actually be used to strengthen offerings if the public and those who hold the public trust are to be satisfied.

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