CONVERSATIONS ABOUT QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: WHAT ARE THEY AND WHERE DO WE TAKE THEM?

AN EXPLORATORY PAPER FROM THE COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION

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ABOUT CHEA
The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) serves its member institutions through its advocacy for the value and independence of accreditation, its rigorous and demanding standards for the effectiveness of U.S. accrediting organizations, its service as an authority and repository of actionable research shaping the future of accreditation and quality assurance and its leadership and commitment to quality in higher education nationally and internationally.

NATIONAL QUALITY DIALOGUE ™

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A National Quality Dialogue has been launched by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) with an inaugural meeting in July 2019 in Washington DC. The purpose of the Dialogue is to provide a national forum for discussion of the all-important issue of quality in higher education, where we are today and ways to approach the future of quality. The inaugural meeting involved a with a wide-ranging discussion of quality in higher education. Presidents and chancellors joined with policy leaders and CHEA board members in a broad discussion of quality and an examination of three key questions:

- *How do we provide additional focus and emphasis on the vital quality issues for colleges and universities today and in the future?*
- *What tools can we identify and share that higher education leaders can use when addressing quality with key constituents of higher education?*
- *How do we vigorously reaffirm the leadership role of higher education in framing future expectations of quality?*

This paper was prepared for the inaugural meeting and provided background for the day's discussion and the Dialogue itself, briefly describing a number of the current major quality conversations and noting their similarities and differences. It is the first of a number of papers that CHEA will be issuing as the Dialogue proceeds.

The paper's major takeaways are:

- *The five major actors in the higher education quality space considered in this paper - higher education and accreditation themselves, research and policy institutes and foundations, alternative providers, the federal government and employers - each bring different perspectives to the quality conversation.*
- *At the same time, all of the major actors are focused on student achievement as a central indicator of quality.*
- *Based on these conversations, quality conversations in the future are likely to encounter and address:*
  - *Even greater attention to student achievement and success.*
  - *Additional public scrutiny and judgment about what counts as quality.*
  - *Continued diversification of the higher education environment.*
  - *Greater consideration of social justice, equity and inequality and free speech issues when addressing quality.*
  - *A continued drive toward greater government regulation of quality, with ongoing pressure for further uniformity and standardization.*
  - *Increasing attention to community and civic engagement as a key dimension of judging quality.*

Introduction

"What is quality?" has been a staple of conversation in higher education, not only for decades but for centuries. In the current environment, this conversation is complex, involving many constituents and, at times, contentious. To explore and address the central question of quality, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has initiated a "National Quality Dialogue," a series of national and regional meetings, interviews with key leaders in higher education and a research and publications series. The Dialogue involves a framing and exploring of academic quality in relation to the future of higher education and accreditation

Why another quality conversation and why now? Both higher education and accreditation are currently subject to unprecedented public scrutiny and pressures to change. Public scrutiny of the success of higher education has intensified and comes from many quarters: media, government, students, research and policy centers and foundations. Higher education is diversifying, with emerging new types of providers and credentialing of educational experiences, beyond traditional, degree-granting colleges and universities. Emerging diversification includes a dynamic and changing student population, alternative approaches to teaching and learning and variation in how higher education is structured and operates.

This paper briefly explores five major national quality conversations, offering descriptions of the thinking of five significant actors in the quality space: (1) higher education and accreditation, (2) research and policy institutes and foundations, (3) alternative providers (and alternative credentials), (4) the federal government and (5) employers. The intent is to make clear the essential thrust of thinking in each of the conversations and what drives them. The conversations are not mutually exclusive. Although they differ in some key respects, they are similar in a number of instances. What do we learn that enables us to further strengthen quality in higher education? Where might the conversations lead us going forward? What

role might accreditation play?

While not explored in this paper, a key factor in all quality conversations is the backdrop of how technology is affecting all major functions of higher education, including teaching and learning, research and the ongoing operation of higher education providers. As the 2019 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report makes clear, developments in educational technology are driving the future configuration of what higher education is and does, whether through, e.g., adaptive learning technologies, artificial intelligence, robotics, mixed reality, virtual assistants or blockchain. This important topic will be pursued separately in the Dialogue, as part of focusing on sustaining quality while embracing change and innovation.

Quality Conversation 1: Higher Education and Accreditation

The conversation about quality within higher education and accreditation is grounded in traditional academic values long espoused by colleges and universities and long a part of the value foundation of institutional and programmatic accreditation. Quality is about a powerful commitment to a broad-based education – encompassing education for intellectual development, for work and career, for civic and societal engagement and for life-long learning. At the core of this commitment is a heartfelt belief in education as vital to a democratic society, to individual dignity and to shared responsibility for community.

This quality conversation takes many forms. Key questions and issues about quality revolve around teaching and learning, as well as research. What is the evidence that students are developing the skills associated with a broad-based education such as critical thinking and writing skills? How well are higher education degrees preparing students for the workforce and future career success? How well does an undergraduate experience prepare students for graduate education, whether in the disciplines or a profession? How effective is research in contributing to

knowledge development and to society? Most recently, quality is coming to be judged by how well higher education institutions address vital social issues such as diversity and equity.

To carry out this commitment, higher education and accreditation have long focused on a mission-based approach to determining expectations of quality. The quality conversation is centered on student achievement and success as defined by the mission or purpose of a college or university, how to accomplish this and how to examine it. This approach requires a significant commitment to institutional autonomy and shared governance and especially the academic leadership role of faculty. Academic freedom also is central to the higher education quality conversation.

Accreditation, higher education's primary means of judging quality, is key to carrying out these commitments. Accreditation relies on formative evaluation and peer review as the most effective means of examining and judging colleges and universities. The driving force in establishing and sustaining of accreditation has historically been quality improvement. It is through this lens that colleges, universities and accrediting organizations organize their work, evaluate their effectiveness and approach innovation and change in higher education. It is through this lens that higher education and accreditation seek to address the pressures to change and public scrutiny.

Within this framework of longstanding and fundamental value commitments, higher education and accreditation have devoted extensive efforts to address the diversification of higher education. At the heart of these undertakings is attention to changes that further strengthen the student experience to improve success in the context of the diversifying population. These include both additional attention to changes in teaching and learning practice and application of technology to improved capacity to judge student performance and intervene to provide additional assistance as needed.

- Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) was launched by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in 2005 to promote essential learning outcomes, high-impact educational practices, authentic assessments and inclusive excellence in support of quality for all students across institutions of higher education. LEAP involves hundreds of campuses, as well as a number of state and research partnerships.

- The Student Achievement Measure (SAM) developed by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities focuses on the increasing mobility of the student population. SAM tracks the progress of undergraduate students not only within a single institution, but also across institutions. SAM uses data from the National Student Clearinghouse and is supported and used by a number of Washington-based higher education associations.

- The University of Michigan and Georgia State University each offer examples of a trend in using predictive analytics to enhance student achievement outcomes. The Digital Innovation Greenhouse at Michigan alerts advisors when students may be experiencing a dip in academic performance, before they reach the point of needing to withdraw. Georgia State uses a system to track less-prepared students even before they start college in order to provide additional coaching and assistance to improve persistence and completion.

- The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), focused on identifying and replicating assessment data to strengthen undergraduate education, has been a key partner in implementing the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). Used by hundreds of institutions across the country, the DQP framework lays out what graduates at the associate, bachelors and master's

levels know and can do.

- The National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE), administered by Indiana University, is an annual survey of first-year and senior students at over 500 four-year institutions. NSSE is a tool that uses student feedback to help institutions improve the undergraduate learning experience. Additionally, it offers insights into how that key audience is viewing the quality of their higher education learning experience. NSSE also works in partnership with the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), based at the University of Texas at Austin. CCSSE was launched a few years after NSSE to focus on information about quality, student engagement and student learning at community colleges around the country.

- The American Association of Community Colleges, American Association of State Colleges and Universities and Association of Public and Land-grant Universities issued the Post-Collegiate Outcome Framework and Toolkit in 2015. This framework captures public and personal benefit in terms of economic and social capital and looks beyond immediate short-term returns such as first-year salaries to include such factors as likelihood to vote and health outcomes.

Another example of change in higher education is an emerging focus on structural change. One of the most prominent efforts is the use of one type of alternative provider, Online Program Managers (please also see Quality Conversation 3 below for more on alternative providers).

An Online Program Management (OPM) company is an online educational service within a traditional institution. Rather than develop an online capacity themselves, colleges and universities contract with these companies to provide assistance with developing and implementing online programs. OPMs serve as third-party vendors and are typically for-profit. Their services are varied, from initiating online programs to assisting with enrollment management to providing marketing services They are involved in developing curricula and setting admission standards.

- Academic Partnerships has been operating since 2007, working with universities in the online space. Today, the organization is engaged with more than 60 institutions in the United States and abroad. Its work has included assisting more than 5,200 faculty members in the development of 5,400 courses in an online format. It has involved 650 undergraduate and graduate degree programs and support for more than 270,000 students. Its services range from assistance with enrollment and retention to data science and analytics to course development and delivery to marketing.

- Wiley Education Services is a subsidiary of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Operating since 1996, Wiley Education is a consulting and program development service for colleges and universities. Its services include marketing, student recruitment and retention as well as development of online programs and platforms, using what is known as a Solutions Architecture approach.

Quality Conversation 2: Higher Education Research and Policy Institutes and Foundations

Major research and policy institutes and foundations that are prominent in national conversations about quality in higher education are currently focused on a small but significant number of issues. How each treats these issues may vary considerably

based on the value foundation or political orientation of these organizations. These include, e.g., the Center for American Progress, New America, American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation.

The current issues arise from the conviction that judgments about quality of colleges and universities are to be based primarily on student achievement and consumer protection as well as success with education for work and workforce development. Quality judgments are to include the extent to which colleges and universities improve the economic well-being of students as measured by earnings upon completion of education, the extent and manageability of debt incurred and the upward mobility of students. To achieve these results, most, if not all, of these institutes and foundations also support greater government regulation of higher education and accreditation, although the extent and type of desired regulation varies considerably.

Most recently, some think tanks and foundations have begun to focus on issues of social justice and equity, reflecting on financing efforts to better address diversity and opportunity for low-income, women and minority students. The focus includes some attention to sexual misconduct as well. They are also starting to engage in conversations about free speech and academic freedom.

In addressing accreditation, policy institutes and foundations are strong voices calling for outcomes-based measures to replace or at least augment the longstanding accreditor emphasis on resources and processes. This call is persistent, even as accrediting organizations themselves are taking significant steps to embrace emphasis on outcomes and results.

In addition, these policy institutes and foundations raise a number of questions about accreditation's effectiveness. Their primary concern reflects an oft-stated perception that accreditation needs to play a stronger role in sustaining minimal performance of institutions to assure both that students experience a quality education and that the taxpayer money that supports

this education, hundreds of billions of dollars a year, is well spent.

- The Center for American Progress outlined an alternative approach to accreditation and quality assurance in the fall of 2016. It is designed to complement the current use of accreditation as a means of determining eligibility for federal financial aid. The three primary elements of this approach are (1) standards of financial health and student outcomes, (2) the use of third party organizations to set standards and thresholds and (3) USDE collection and validation of the outcomes measures.

- The Third Way has a slate of policy proposals that, in tandem, reach beyond quality assurance and focus heavily on consumer protections through financial risk-sharing, completion and credit transfer. In the last year, Third Way introduced ten policy proposals that address higher education quality and value to students and taxpayers. The Third Way issued a proposal to create a stronger connection between accreditation and student outcomes by instituting a "half & half" rule e.g., for accreditors to maintain recognition by the USDE, they would need to assure that at least half of their member institutions or programs perform above the 50 percent threshold on at least two of the three following measures: (1) graduation as measured by an Outcomes Measures graduation rate, (2) earnings above the high school graduate level or (3) student debt repayment.

- A proposal by EducationCounsel for recalibrating the regulatory environment for higher education quality based on a "differentiated accreditation" approach incorporates many competing stakeholder interests and includes five core elements in a dynamic framework: (1) a focus on student outcomes, (2) risk assessment

as the key focus for accreditors, (3) differentiated engagement between accreditors and institutions, (4) aligned recognition process and (5) regulatory relief.

- The Institute for Higher Education Policy and EducationCounsel issued a report, *Improving Performance: Recommendations for Enhancing Accreditor Data-Use to Promote Student Success and Equity*, in June 2019. An early example of the growing interest in expanding the role of accreditation in addressing equity issues, the report urges greater attention to outcomes data as part of promoting greater equity in higher education.

- The American Enterprise Institute (AEI), in examining the changing higher education space, has explored a variety of models for future regulation and quality assurance. The models typically include an emphasis on outcomes-based accountability, expanded reliance on data, more transparency and potential changes in federal and state law and regulation to assure consumer protection. The AEI modeling also includes attention to the role of private financing as higher education continues to diversify.

Quality Conversation 3: Alternative Providers and Alternative Credentials

"Quality" for alternative providers revolves around innovation, affordability and access. The market, in contrast to regulation, plays a key role in quality judgments. "Alternative providers" are typically nonprofit or for-profit companies that offer short-term training in either vocational or general education. These offerings are often, but not exclusively, online, with the purpose of assisting students to obtain employment or further their employment goals, to move to a degree-

granting college or university or to engage in personal development. They are typically, but not always, low cost or lower-cost than traditional higher education.

The various types of alternative providers include companies offering massive open online courses (MOOCs) known for the scale of their offerings as well as, at least initially, the absence of any cost for the offerings. Major examples are FutureLearn, Coursera and edX. MOOCs' overall growth has been considerable, with more than 101 million students worldwide and involving not only private companies but also more than 900 universities, by the end of 2018. MOOCs are increasingly connected to the traditional sector through university partnerships and also offer certificates and even degrees.

- Coursera, the largest MOOC, is based in the United States but operates across over 40 countries with more than 3,600 courses and 40 million students. Coursera offers courses with more than 150 partner institutions and 1,700 companies. Recently, Coursera has begun working with several universities to create "master's track certificates," credentials roughly equal to a third of a master's degree.

- edX, a nonprofit MOOC started by MIT and Harvard in 2012, uses an open-source platform to reach over 20 million students globally. edX recently announced a new degree path that connects "MicroMasters" to a full master's degree. The model allows for students to combine institutions, for instance, leveraging a six-course MicroMaster in supply chain management from MIT to count towards a full master's program in supply change management at Arizona State University.

Alternative providers also include companies such as StraighterLine and General Assembly.

- StraighterLine is a private, U.S.-based company offering career and general education coursework online at prices that are considerably lower than a

degree-granting college or university. Many of these courses can be transferred to a college or university. StraighterLine maintains "credit transfer guarantees" with more than 130 institutions.

- General Assembly, a private company, specializes in in-demand skills in areas such as digital marketing, data analytics and software engineering. The company has also developed a proposed alternative approach to quality assurance focused on nontraditional education programs, Measuring What Matters. This approach provides a means to track student learning outcomes and a framework for reporting them. General Assembly's work here is the result of applying the American Institute of Certified Professional Accountants definitions and audit standards to education.

In general, alternative providers have a business model that does not depend on public funding or accreditation. Companies rely on competition and a focus on developing strong industry connections to assure that their curricula are reflective of real-time employer hiring in order to attract students. Some alternative providers have emphasized affordability of offerings to attract students while others, such as coding boot camps, charge tuition that is beyond the means of many.

"Alternative credentials" are acknowledgment of work or acquisition of skills based on completing a sequence of offerings that are typically shorter-term than a traditional degree. Such credentials can be awarded in a range of areas, whether to affirm specific skills for work or a more general educational experience. They include badges or other micro-credentials offered by alternative providers. For example, Udacity offers a Nanodegree; Coursera offers Specialization Certificates; and edX offers an xSeries Certificate.

Although it is alternative providers that typically offer alternative credentials, these

may also be offered by traditional institutions. A 2016 study found that approximately 175 institutions were issuing alternative credentials of some sort.

While accreditation is not a significant factor in the determination of quality for individual alternative providers or credentials at this time, accreditors do focus on this development through scrutiny of partnerships into which these providers enter with accredited institutions or programs. A 2018 survey of recognized accrediting organizations for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation carried out by NORC at the University of Chicago found that these organizations are focusing more and more attention on innovation and, for some accreditors, this includes attention to alternative providers. At the same time, accreditors currently express limited interest in expanding their quality review practices to incorporate free-standing alternative providers or alternative credentialing. And, the values central to higher education as described in Conversation 1, are not factors here, either.

Quality Conversation 4: Federal Government

The formal federal role in discussions of quality dates back 70 years, when government turned to accreditation to affirm the quality of institutions as veterans returned from World War II and enrolled in college. The role is bipartisan and includes both the Congress and the Executive Branch. Current quality expectations are reflected in federal law and regulation and in the work of the U.S. Department of Education.

The quality conversation within the federal government is driven by three key factors: the centrality of education for work, good use of the hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars that go into higher education each year and consumer protection. "Quality" is about colleges and universities sustaining strong graduation rates, successful transfer of credit, reliable and readily available evidence that graduates obtain well-paying jobs that, if sustaining debt, students can manage

this without defaulting. Also, achieving quality, at least in present thinking, needs to involve ongoing and sometimes extensive government oversight through law and regulation.

The primary tools for the federal role in higher education quality include oversight and annual reporting by institutions and accreditors as well as adhering to regulations and statutes. Accrediting organizations, reviewed periodically by government (a process known as "recognition"), are considered to maintain quality to the extent that their institutions and programs support student achievement as described from a federal perspective: graduation, employment and managing debt. Accrediting organizations are not considered of satisfactory quality (1) when their institutions or programs are seen as harming students through students accumulating excessive debt or sustaining high drop-out rates or (2) when they accredit institutions or programs from which students are not able to obtain good jobs. This conversation is captured by the oft-used phrase "access, affordability, accountability" that describes federal expectations of accreditation and higher education.

Most recently, the federal conversation is starting to include consideration of an additional tool characterized by some in the U.S. Congress as a "federal accountability system" or "federal accountability measures." A key feature of this conversation is it moves away from the longstanding more general consideration of academic quality in the context of accreditation and develops a separately determined set of federal expectations about the performance – and even about the levels of performance – of institutions.

For example, during the past few years, papers or presentations by key leaders and legislation proposed in the U.S. House and Senate reflect calls for more useful data to examine performance, measuring and even setting levels of learning and student success in graduation and achievement of other educational goals. Suggestions include setting expectations of institutional

performance with regard to student loans and indebtedness as well as employment and earnings. If realized through a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act or other legislative action, such an approach would take steps toward federally driven "culture of accountability" in which institutions and programs receiving federal funds are to operate.

- The College Transparency Act was re-introduced in both the House and Senate in 2019, a renewed attempt to establish a student unit record system as a key basis for examining the effectiveness of higher education. The legislation would provide for federal tracking and reporting on student-level data on enrollment and completion as well as on success after college. The focus is student outcomes and these data may be aggregated and disaggregated as needed by users with the goal of providing greater assistance to students in making decisions with regard to postsecondary education.

- During the April 10, 2019 Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing on strengthening accountability, Committee Chair Lamar Alexander and Ranking Member Patty Murray each talked about greater accountability primarily with regard to student indebtedness and loan repayment. The conversation also included attention to the value of a degree and additional scrutiny of poorly performing institutions.

- Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) released a white paper in June 2019, a new proposal on accountability, in which he discusses federal policy-setting floors for student success, including and implementing a "New Accountability Framework" of threshold acceptable percentages for graduation and holding institutions accountable for at least minimum pay-down of debt by students.

Federal data collection and transparency have been steadily expanding, with more and more detailed information available to students and the public about the performance of colleges and universities:

- *College Scorecard*, managed by USDE, provides institutional snapshots based on five data points – cost, graduation rate, employment rate, average amount borrowed, and loan default.

- *College Navigator*, also managed by the USDE, offers consumers a searchable database that includes criteria such as institution type, programs offered, test scores and tuition.

- Accreditor dashboards were developed by USDE to provide a visual image of graduation rates, student earnings, debt and default arrayed by individual accrediting organizations.

- USDE maintains the *Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs*, a searchable compendium of institutions and programs accredited by federally recognized accrediting organizations as reported by these organizations.

Quality Conversation 5: Employers

The quality conversation among employers is primarily about the workforce and skills. Employers consistently call for quality in the form of employees improved technical skills and soft skills (capacity to learn and grow, ability to work with others, speaking and effective communication). For their companies or industries, employers see quality in higher education as the capacity of educators to contribute to workforce and economic development generally, to innovation and to flexibility within the workforce.

Employers have long participated in workforce training for job-specific skills,

though two trends are newer: working with alternative credential providers to develop and deliver tailored badges and certifications and seeking ways to develop quality assurance mechanisms focused on business needs. Companies themselves spent $87.6 billion in 2018.

A major factor driving employer interest in quality is the increasing level of education needed by those entering the workforce. Two-thirds of jobs today require at least some college, compared with two-thirds requiring a high school degree in the 1980s. A recent study by the Center for Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University estimates that 56 percent of good jobs – or paying at least $35,000 for workers 25-44 and at least $45,000 for workers 45-64 – require at least a four-year college education. Additionally, in a survey of 750 personnel leaders by Northeastern University's Center for the Future of Higher Education and Talent Strategy, 44 percent said they have increased the level of education preferred/required for the same job roles over the last five years—due both to increased skills demands and to increased supply in the market.

- A joint analysis of millions of job postings by Burning Glass Technologies and the American Enterprise Institute found that liberal arts students can avoid underemployment by adding in-demand skills to their studies. A Brookings economist similarly argues that workers who have a combination of soft skills like team work and problem solving and industry-specific skills will be better positioned to weather displacement from automation and artificial intelligence. He notes that the combination of sector-specific or tailored programs are most successful for raising skills and income for workers entering fields such as health care, information technology, advanced manufacturing and transportation and logistics. These programs include partnerships between

industry and community colleges as well as apprenticeships.

Employers, on an ongoing basis, have expressed at least some impatience with higher education's quality conversation, believing that it is not focused enough on providing this employee and workforce development. Employers themselves have recently given some thought to establishing their own quality assurance regimen.

- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has identified the quality assurance feedback loop of higher education as a point of disconnect between what students are learning in higher education and employers need. In 2016, the Chamber developed an alternative to traditional accreditation in higher education, a quality assurance model based on the ISO 9001 standards for quality management systems, published by the International Organization for Standardization, with the intent of using the standard for certifying a program's workforce relevance. In the Chamber's higher education triad, federal and state government are combined, with the business sector filling the role of answering "Are you able to produce a skilled and competitive workforce?" In this model, a private for-profit or nonprofit third-party validator (not government) would assess the programs.

Moving Forward

Each of these five conversations differs, driven by the perspectives and purposes of each constituent. At the same time, all reflect a powerful commitment to student achievement and success. And, in a number of instances, what counts as student achievement and success is quite similar, as the chart nearby demonstrates. Developing a future dialogue on quality involves acknowledgment of the similarities in each of these conversations, as well as how each differs from the other.

Conversation	Purpose/ Perspective/ Lens	Student Achievement
Higher Education and Accreditation	Quality is seen through the lens of broad-based education, grounded in the value of a mission-based approach to structuring higher education, institutional autonomy and academic freedom.	Student achievement is about realizing a range of educational goals, from intellectual development to work and career to civic engagement. The emphasis is on a well-rounded education, whatever the goal.
Institutes and Foundations	Quality is seen through the lens of evidence of outcomes, education for work and financial wellbeing as well as, most recently, additional focus on success in addressing major social equity and justice issues.	Student achievement is about obtaining employment, improving employment, desirable earnings and limited indebtedness. More recently, success is about a more and more diverse population of students achieving these goals.
Alternative Providers and Credentials	Quality is seen through the lens of the value of short-term education often tied to achieving career goals, accompanied by a primary emphasis on innovation and flexibility of operation, as well as affordability.	Student achievement is about shorter-term education credentialing to assist in employment and employability and further education.
Federal Government	Quality is seen through the lens of good use of federal money by higher education, achieving an educated workforce and addressing student indebtedness. Consumer protection is a key factor in this lens as well.	Student achievement is about degree or credential completion, jobs, earnings and manageable indebtedness.
Employers	Quality is seen through the lens of needed technical and soft skills, overall workforce and economic development for the society.	Student achievement is about needed skills for employment and upward mobility.

Anticipating Future Quality Conversations

This paper introduces conversations about quality across and among the various constituents of higher education. While differences will remain in terms of perspective and focus, several current trends will likely continue to dominate these ongoing conversations:

- The focus on student achievement and success.
- Public scrutiny and judgment about what count as quality.
- The emerging diversification of the higher education environment.
- The emerging trend toward including social justice and equity issues as part of judgments about quality.
- Continuation of a drive toward greater regulation, and perhaps even greater uniformity and standardization of expectations of quality.
- Increasing attention to community and civic engagement as a key dimension of judging quality.

CHEA, in launching a National Quality Dialogue, provides a focal point for ongoing national consideration of quality in higher education around the following questions:

- How do we provide additional focus and emphasis on the vital quality issues for colleges and universities today and in the future?
- What tools can we identify and share that higher education leaders can use when addressing quality with key constituents of higher education?
- How do we vigorously reaffirm the leadership role of higher education in framing expectations of quality?

To address these questions, the Dialogue will involve a range of activities, including:

- A series of Regional Quality Dialogues on the future of quality in higher education.
- Interviews with key higher education and other policy leaders and student groups.
- Additional commissioned papers or research.