

A Review of the Accreditation Commission for Audiology Education (ACAE) and Its Focus

BY DORIS GORDON AND IAN M. WINDMILL

In this issue, we're bringing you a quick review of ACAE and its focus. In forthcoming columns, we will tell you more about ACAE's external organizations and the importance they play in higher education and accreditation today. We'd like to hear from you! Send questions to doris.gordon3@verizon.net.

MORE THAN A DECADE AGO, A FORWARD-THINKING

group of audiologists predicted that the profession would be at the doctoral level in the early part of the 21st century. As the transition from a master's- to a doctoral-level profession began, the need became apparent for standards of excellence by which this new cohort of audiologists would be trained. To achieve this goal, the American Academy of Audiology and the Academy of Dispensing Audiologists (now the Academy of Doctors of Audiology) believed it necessary to develop an independent accrediting agency whose focus was developing educational standards for audiology programs that would be consistent with the mandate for doctoral-level education. The ACAE was founded in January 2003 with the goal of not merely replicating existing accreditation programs but creating an innovative program that addressed the perceived problems with accreditation.

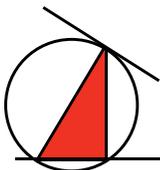
To this end, the ACAE drew from the recommendations of the Pew Health Professions Commission, sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trust, and their publication *Strategies for Change and Improvement Report of the Task Force on Accreditation of Health Professions Education* (1999). The Pew commission

recognized three common issues with accreditation:

1. Costs, particularly with regard to time and personnel costs in preparation for accreditation,
2. Efficiency, and
3. The perception that accreditation was viewed as an enforcement action as opposed to improvement.

The commission offered the following recommendations:

1. Streamline the accreditation process to increase accountability and minimize duplication and waste.
2. Increase flexibility and responsiveness by integrating new, resource-conserving technologies into the accreditation process.
3. Collaborate with educational programs to help create a culture where improvement is planned...and part of the routine and ongoing daily work.



In addition, the mandates to the ACAE included the necessity of meeting the requirements for recognition as an accrediting body by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). In keeping with this mandate, the requirements for recognition by USDE and CHEA have been reviewed and integrated into the policies and procedures and plans of the ACAE.

Over the past five years, the USDE has undertaken a careful review of the status of both regional and specialized accreditation in the United States. Particularly relevant to the ACAE, two related concepts have emerged:

1. Accountability and
2. Student achievement.

According to the USDE, there is increased demand from the government, consumers, and the general public for institutions to be accountable for their performance related to education.

Thus, the ACAE purposely focused on the concept of an innovative approach to accreditation that took into account the recommendations of the Pew commission, the mandates of the USDE, CHEA, and the goals of the Academy and the ADA to develop an accreditation system for AuD programs. The ACAE was eager to establish an agency that was on the cutting-edge of accreditation and took time to study how this could be

accomplished. Through thoughtful discussion, the ACAE determined that accreditation could best be served through the incorporation of three critical elements:

1. A Web-based, automated system for data collection that increased efficiency, but also allowed programs to benchmark performance across a variety of data elements.
2. A system whose focus was continuous improvement through the identification and sharing of best practices in education.
3. A means for programs to assess performance through assessment of student learning outcomes based on the objectives of entry-level knowledge and skills for academic programs.

For more information, please visit ACAE's Web site at www.aceaaccred.org. **AT**

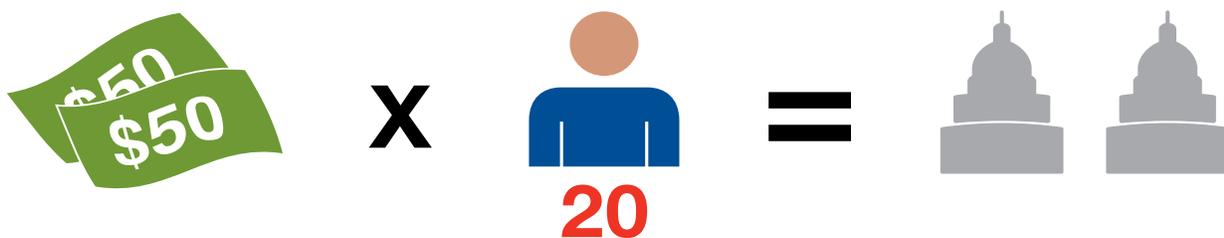
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