

Rethinking Accreditation

Anne D. Neal

President, American Council of Trustees and Alumni

Let's rethink.

Isn't accreditation a good housekeeping seal of approval???



No way!



What do I mean?

Faculty Research on Student Learning

Two Years:

45% showed
Minimal Improvement



Four Years:

36% showed
Minimal
Improvement

Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift. Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011)

All of the schools were accredited.

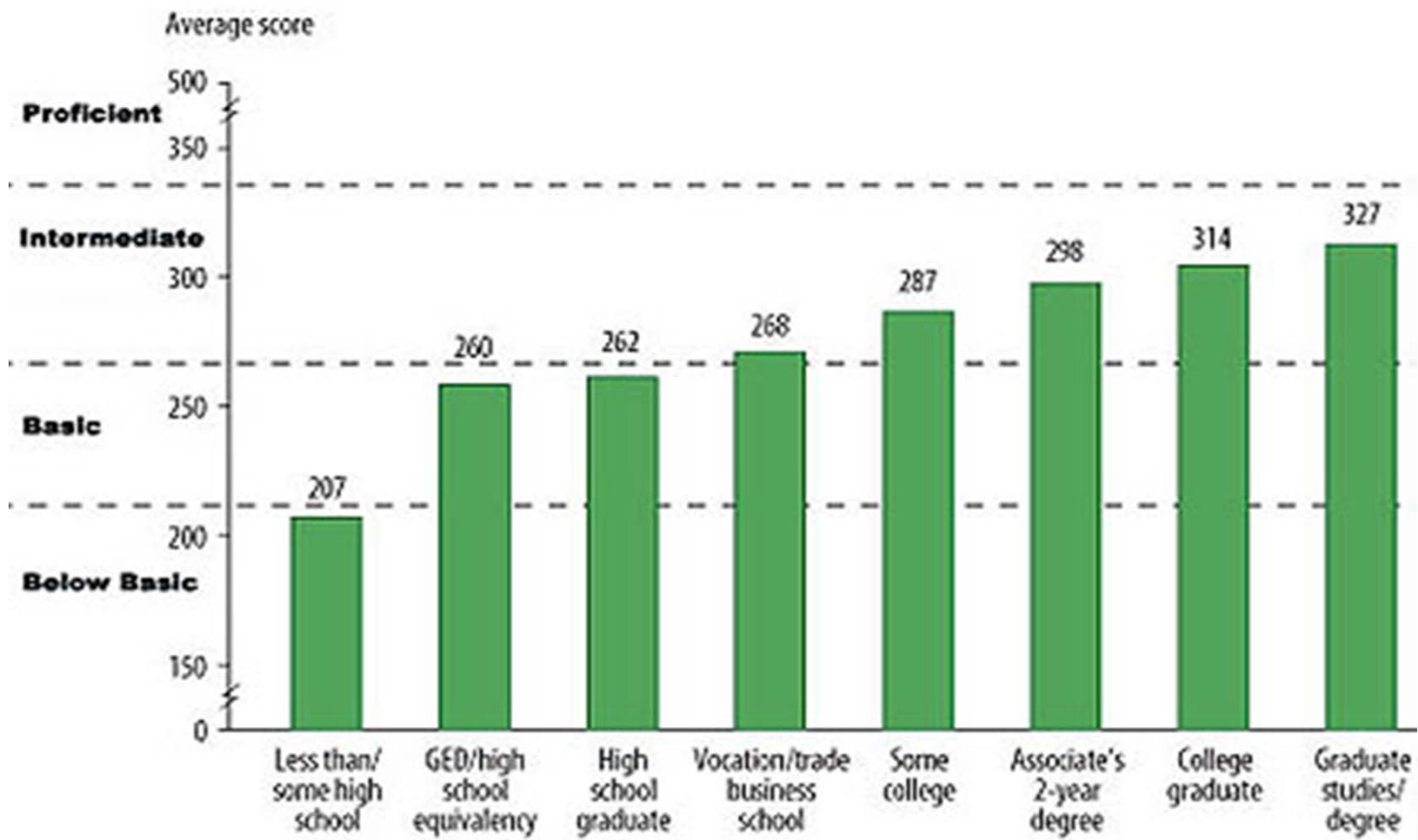
But lack of quality is only an isolated problem. Right? Wrong.

“There is more variation within institutions than across institutions.

... high- and low-performing students can be found at each institution and within each level of selectivity.”

Richard Arum, Josipa Roksa, Esther Cho, *Improving Undergraduate Learning: Findings and Policy Recommendations from the SSRC-CLA Longitudinal Project* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2011) http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%7Bd06178be-3823-e011-ade0-001cc477ec84%7D.pdf

National Assessment of Adult Literacy



What Does Proficient Mean?

Proficient indicates skills necessary to perform more complex and challenging literacy activities.

Score ranges for *Proficient*:

Prose: 340–500

Document: 335–500

Quantitative: 350–500

- reading lengthy, complex, abstract prose texts as well as synthesizing information and making complex inferences
- integrating, synthesizing, and analyzing multiple pieces of information located in complex documents
- locating more abstract quantitative information and using it to solve multistep problems when the arithmetic operations are not easily inferred and the problems are more complex
- comparing viewpoints in two editorials
- interpreting a table about blood pressure, age, and physical activity
- computing and comparing the cost per ounce of food items



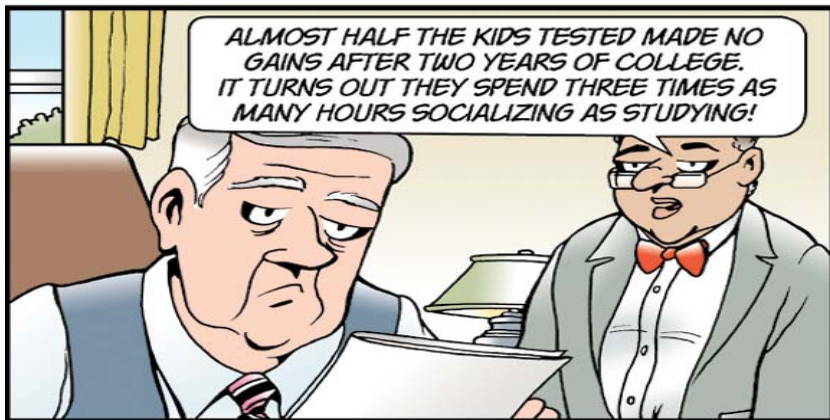
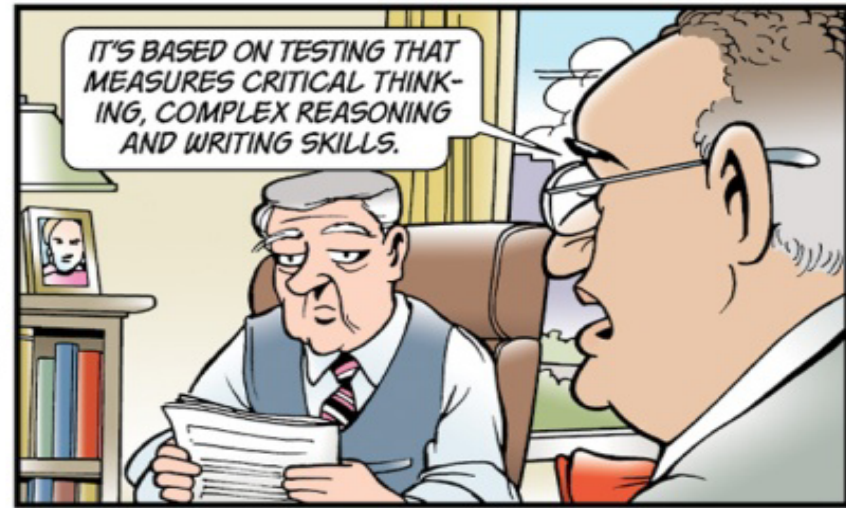
ACTA
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
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National Perspective: The View Of Employers

- 23.9% find graduates overall preparation “excellent.”
- 64.5% say “adequate.”
- 26.2% find their writing skills “deficient”

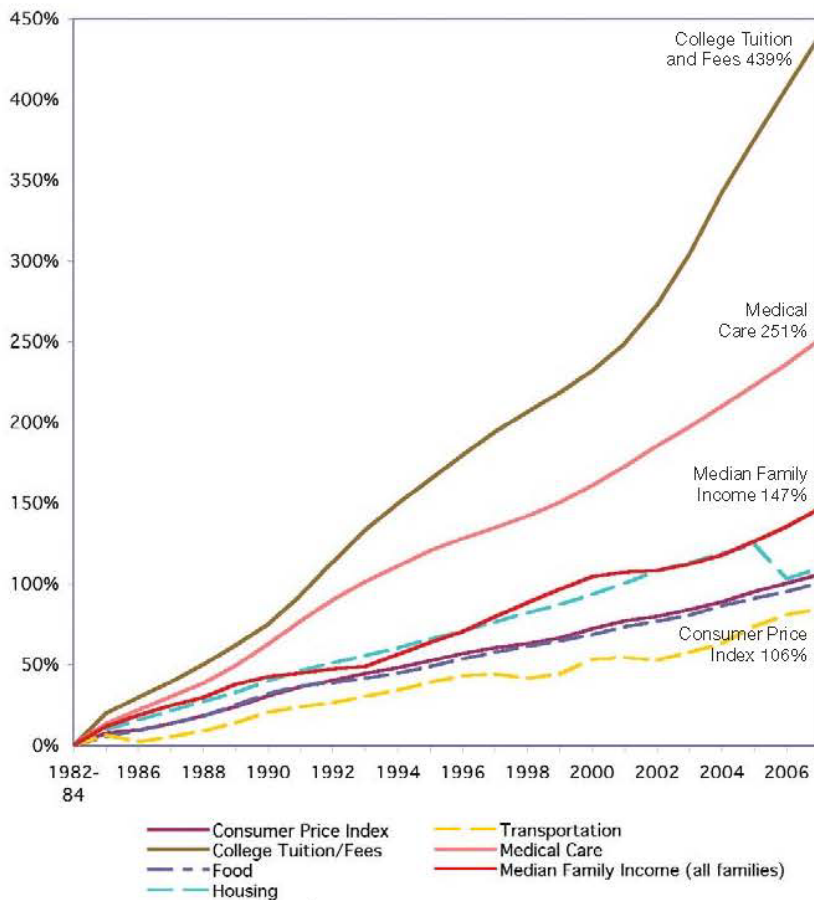
Linda Barrington and Jill Casner-Lotto, Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce (The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, The Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the Society for Human Resource Management, 2006)





Meanwhile costs continue to skyrocket.

Percent Growth Rate in Current Dollar Price Since 1982-84



Net College Costs* as a Percent of Median Family Income

At public four-year colleges and universities	1999-00	2007-08	% pts increased
Lowest income quintile	39%	55%	16%
Lower-middle income quintile	23%	33%	10%
Middle income quintile	18%	25%	7%
Upper-middle income quintile	12%	16%	4%
Highest Income quintile	7%	9%	3%
At public two-year colleges			
Lowest income quintile	40%	49%	9%
Lower-middle income quintile	22%	29%	7%
Middle income quintile	15%	20%	5%
Upper-middle income quintile	10%	13%	3%
Highest Income quintile	6%	7%	2%

* Net college costs equal tuition, room, and board, minus financial aid. The numbers may not add exactly due to rounding. Source: *Measuring Up 2008*.

From *Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Higher Education* by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education
<http://measuringup2008.highereducation.org/print/NCPPEMUNationalRpt.pdf>

And institutions point the finger at accreditation.

- **How well does our current accreditation/recognition system protect the interests of the taxpayer who is underwriting that investment in education?**
- **Shirley Tilghman, president, Princeton University:**
 - Not well enough. ... It is becoming common for institutions to report that the cost of preparing for a decennial review exceeded \$1 million and occupied hundreds of thousands of hours of staff time.... There needs to be a serious reckoning of benefit versus cost in this bureaucratic system that seems to be running amok.
 - ...The “one size fits all approach” to accreditation will constrain innovation, creativity, and improvement.... If recent trends continue, in which the staff of accrediting agencies seek to substitute their own judgments about what mission an institution should pursue, we risk damaging the country’s leading institutions.
- **John Etchemendy, Provost, Stanford University:** Ultimately, accreditation is no substitute for public opinion and market forces as a guide to the value of the education we offer.
- **Mary Sue Coleman, President, University of Michigan:** In 2000, our total cost [of accreditation] was approximately \$370,000....Costs for 2010 were considerably higher, \$1.3 million....These figures do not include the time invested by faculty and staff....

Accreditation is a Barrier to Innovation and Affordability

- **Barmak Nassirian, Associate Executive Director, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers:**
- ...the quality assurance scheme that once worked magnificently well has failed to keep pace with the transformational changes in the industry it is supposed to oversee, and it is increasingly reduced to a vestigial structure with little relevance or effect.

Transfer Problems.

Letter to the Secretary of Education from ACTA, Education Sector, AEI, CCAP:

- According to a recent report by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation, “a 1999 CHEA survey of college catalogs found that **28 percent of regionally accredited institutions contained language that transfer requests would be considered only from institutions that were regionally accredited. Another 10 percent contained language that transfer requests from institutions that are reviewed by national faith-related or national career-related accreditors would be considered, but that regional accreditation would be preferred.**”
- In a world where **nearly 60 percent of college students can be expected to earn credits from more than one institution of higher learning**, the institutional practice of privileging certain kinds of federally-recognized accreditors over others cannot continue. The students who are hurt most ... are those with the least amount of advising, the least amount of money to spend. This is unconscionable.

More Transfer Problems

Response from Secretary Arne Duncan:

- “there are financial and human costs associated with restrictive college credit transfer policies.”
- “to investigate unsuccessful credit transfer attempts, NCES expects to conduct additional analyses of a subset of transcripts provided by institutions that list both the number of credits students attempt to transfer ... and the number of credits accepted.... A more in-depth analysis will be done of student and institution characteristics. NCES expects to release a report summarizing the analyses within a year.”

...Discourages New Models

- The current system can force start-up institutions to operate for as long as five years before becoming eligible for federal financial aid.
- Regulations on seat time and institutional change often privilege traditional bricks and mortar models.
- DOE regulations prohibiting universities from ceding more than 25 percent of the “educational program” to a non-eligible institution, (i.e., a non-degree-granting institution), to receive federal financial aid, can discourage new delivery models.
- The Higher Learning Commission applies the same standard when making accreditation decisions.

More Problems

For example:

“Equal Partnership” between Arizona State University and Pearson: Pearson and Arizona State [struck a deal](#) in October that gave Pearson an equal stake in the university’s online campus. Arizona State retained control over teaching and curriculum, while Pearson agreed to run the online learning platform, marketing and recruitment, and tech support.

- **Sylvia Manning, HLC Head:** May not violate “25 percent”. “It’s not good or bad, but it sure is different,” she says. “If this is done well, there’s nothing wrong with it. But since this is new, it can be in danger of going off the rails.” (IHE)

Intrudes on Institutional Decisionmaking

- **The American Law Deans Association, 2007:** “The accrediting body inappropriately inserts itself into the internal affairs of the institutions it accredits... and does so in a way that forces homogeneity, and conversely stifles innovation and diversity, among law schools.”
- **ACTA, 2011:** The ABA imposes standards that limit student employment; require institutions to determine faculty student ratios based on the number of tenured professors, without regard to the important (and generally more affordable) role adjuncts play; and limit online learning, an often cheaper and better form of delivery.

MYOB.

Middle States Accrediting Commission on the University of Delaware

- “We recommend that the institution should commit itself forcefully and visibly to improving the diversity of its whole community – students, faculty, and staff. .. We recommend that a coherent plan be developed to further enhance gender diversity among the science and engineering faculty and to make what appears to be even more important progress in racial diversity among the entire faculty.”

Undermines rather than supports quality

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools on Northern Kentucky University, General Education Program:

- The USDOE: [SACS] is still not in compliance with federal regulations when reviewing the NKU program.
- The Education Department disagrees with SACS' claim that the NKU program was not a "significant departure from existing offerings of educational programs." The new curriculum amounts to a "concerted and systematic effort to implement a wholly new general-education program."

Another example....

New England Association of Schools and Colleges on Southern Connecticut University General Education Program:

- The general education requirements do not require that diversity issues be infused into the general education courses. This is not in line with the CSU mission of ‘serving a diverse community.’ (12)
- The CSU “deficient” gen ed curriculum receives a B from ACTA.

Huh?

- **Hamilton College – excerpts from Middle States Commission Report to the Faculty, Administration, Staff, Trustees, Students:**
- “There is evidence from written materials and from conversations with faculty members and students that Hamilton College offers a very fine academic program....
- “Although the College has no breadth or distribution requirements, there are clear statements of the goals of liberal education in the College Catalogue and the Advisors Handbook, and students are asked to be attentive to those goals.
- “It appears that there is strong support for the open curriculum among faculty and students, but there remains work to be done to gain widespread understanding of the nature and strengths of that structure....
- The Visiting Team encourages the college to continue its focus on building a diverse Board that includes more women and people of color, as noted in the Self-Study.

What must be done?

Institutions and taxpayers deserve an alternative that reduces bureaucratic meddling, provides key consumer information, encourages innovation and improvement in higher education and provides greater access:

ACTA's Self Certification Market Based Accreditation Alternative:

- Delink accreditation and the federal gatekeeping function
- Schools meet baseline financial test
- Self-certify on key metrics
- DOE can investigate.
- Accreditors function as voluntary organizations, rising or falling in the marketplace