

# A 2005 OVERVIEW OF ACCREDITATION ISSUES

A PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF THE  
COUNCIL OF ARTS ACCREDITING ASSOCIATIONS  
TO THE  
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF FINE ARTS DEANS

**Scottsdale, Arizona**  
**October 21, 2005**

by

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This presentation provides an overview of accreditation-related issues and explains fundamental rationales for arts accreditation.



## A 2005 OVERVIEW OF ACCREDITATION ISSUES

**ICFAD Conference**  
**Scottsdale, Arizona**  
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### **I. The Arts and Higher Education Perspectives**

**Karen Wolff**

The arts must work together more than ever, both within and across the disciplines. We cannot let our individual or institutional successes and reputations or the large amounts of work we must do at home blind us to the need for common effort on basic things as well as new things.

From a strategic national perspective, accreditation is the mechanism we as a nation have chosen to keep decisions about quality and accountability in the hands of experts in various fields and professions, and not in the hands of government. In other words, through accreditation, we in the academy have the opportunity to keep ourselves free from certain kinds of outside intrusion, particularly with regard to subject matter issues. In order to accomplish this function, we take responsibility for setting basic standards and reviewing ourselves. We need to keep accreditation in the arts disciplines as strong as possible, never running the risk of having this function done for us by someone else.

Accreditation is extremely important to national leaders and spokespersons for higher education because it is important for higher education itself. As you all know, we are in the final stages of reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act. Hours of time have been spent in Washington by the major higher education associations and the accreditation community to protect accreditation in this reauthorization period. The president of the American Council on Education has used the words "precious and fragile resource." The reference to fragile meant that the wrong federal policies with regard to accreditation could endanger its effectiveness. Locally, college leaders may make light of accreditation or express frustration or contempt when there is a decision they do not like, but when the chips are down and the accreditation system is threatened, they rally to its defense and preservation. They know what the alternatives are likely to bring.

The search for quality is indigenous to the arts. Are there any professions more concerned about quality? We all know what quality work is in the arts disciplines. We know quality in our own field better than the others, but we can also identify quality work in all areas. There is a public standard with regard to work.

What are the relationships of accreditation to quality?

First, let's be honest with ourselves. Quality comes from the work of individuals. It does not come from systems or institutions as institutions. Systems and institutions have quality only to the extent that the individuals within them produce quality. The term symphony orchestra does not necessarily connote quality, but mention of the Cleveland Orchestra does. The Cleveland band has more capable people and more capable leadership than most

other symphonic organizations, and has for a long time. Of course, members of the Cleveland Orchestra have an absolute passion for working together. Without this ingredient, the individual capabilities would not mean nearly as much.

Let's be honest with ourselves again. We are living at a time in education where this truth about the source of quality is obscured. The public is being fed the illusion that education is just like buying a car. When you buy a car, the manufacturer is 100% responsible for the quality of the machine you drive out of the showroom. Of course, education is not like that. The student or consumer is responsible for at least half of the product. The emphasis on ratings of institutions, the constant repetition of words like outcomes and quality, the notion that the reputation of an institution is equivalent to the education an individual will receive, all these things show a loss of realistic perspective on issues of quality. It is sad to say it, but such losses of perspective are also observable in higher education, and especially among administrators who either see or are being forced to act as though education were about winning rather than about learning. When basic truths about the source of quality are obscured and the goal becomes images of quality rather than quality work, our priorities get skewed because we need to report quality in symbolic terms rather than in terms of the work itself.

This approach has an impact on accreditation. The relationship between accreditation and quality begins with the setting of standards that define conditions that support the production of quality. Most important, though, standards define the threshold of acceptable performance in terms of knowledge and skills development. These standards produce the foundation and often protection for the efforts of individuals and groups to produce work of quality. The standards produce efficiency because they obviate the need to argue about what the basic needs, content, and levels are. By consensus, the field has agreed that this is the base line of quality. Every institution or program is expected to build its own goals for quality from this foundation. When an accrediting association comes to campus, it does two things. First, it assures that the threshold standards are met. For many institutions this is not an issue. Second, it supports the institution and its programs in their own quest to achieve the highest quality they possibly can. Accreditation does this by being an advocate and often a protector.

As high-level administrators, we have a great deal of practice in looking at the big picture. We know that myopia is dangerous. At times, we are frustrated because we cannot get members of our community to understand the larger interest and how their own specific interests relates to it. This big picture view is essential when looking at the relationship between accreditation and quality. I have the honor to be associated with a venerable and highly respected institution. I am proud of the achievements of this institution and understand fully its capabilities to work independently. But the university of Michigan cannot prepare all of the individuals who come to study in our music, theatre, and dance programs either at the undergraduate or graduate level. Other institutions and teachers must be successful throughout the country if we are to be successful at what we do. Likewise, we have large graduate programs and we are very proud of the students that are enrolled there and the capabilities that they exhibit. We cannot employ every MFA or doctoral candidate that graduates from our school. These individuals must work elsewhere. We have a deep and abiding interest in the places that our graduates work and will work. I could give many

more examples, however, it is clear that the issue of quality for the performing arts at the University of Michigan extends well beyond our own campus or anything we can influence directly. Accreditation is a primary mechanism for working on quality comprehensively as well as institutionally. It is a mechanism for working on quality in the context that each of our institutions works in.

We also need to look at quality in terms of the nature of artistic work. Artists do not work with quality in the same manner as other professions. We share certain aspirations, but purposes, approaches, methodologies, and summaries of results are not the same. Artists are deeply accountable, but not in the same way that businesses are accountable. Over the years, accreditation in the arts has made a powerful case supporting institutional respect for the ways that the arts address quality. It is clear that today these understandings are being eroded by numerous factors. Among them are: generational change in academic administration, increasing fear about the cost and effectiveness of accreditation, the imposition of business models and math based accountability systems, the lost of trust in professional expertise, and so forth. All of these factors are present, but they are not present in the same proportions at each institution. It is clear from discussions within the accrediting associations, and in our regular discussions with leaders of ICFAD that the accrediting associations must find new ways to help institutions and programs make the case for quality on terms that are appropriate for the work of the arts. This is a major strategic issue that can only be addressed by common effort at the national level. We must work together on the issue, lest we begin to lose both philosophical ground and operational time. Too many of us are spending too much time translating the work we do into terms required by others. This represents a massive drag on quality because it puts bureaucratic priorities ahead of thinking and working in the field.

Carole and Sam will also speak about issues of quality, but I want to urge every institution here to recognize that no matter how exalted your position and reputation, and no matter how exalted the quality of the work that comes from your faculty and students, your quality alone will not protect you from certain kinds of issues and problems. For example, they will not protect you from the values of a new president, something just that simple. They will not protect you from federal law or regulations. They will not protect you from the consequences of failure or dissolution of programs at other levels, or from the problems that would ensue if hundreds of other institutions are not supported in their efforts to deliver quality instruction to the people in their communities and in their degree programs.

I want to turn briefly to another issue that is of extreme importance. Since the beginning of arts accreditation, the accrediting associations have said that standards should not mean and must not mean standardization. Yes, we agree on fundamental frameworks for degrees and credentials. We negotiate to find consensus about fundamental operational necessities to support instruction and programs. We articulate competencies that we feel are essential for various specializations. But none of the accreditation standards dictate the way that an institution should achieve these fundamental things. None of the accreditation standards dictate the priorities to be given the various elements of programs that are being reviewed. There is every opportunity to work under the standards and achieve programs that are diverse in their approach and method. However, there are many forces beyond accreditation that create standardization. First, there is tradition.

Second, there is the tendency to imitate rather than create. Many of us and certainly many of our faculty colleagues seek to replicate the institutional experience we found most productive or affirming during our undergraduate and graduate years. The basic organization of higher education into course and semesters and quarters and so forth also are forces that encourage standardization. But now we have other challenges and other forces added to the traditional ones. Through the Internet, we have the ability to ask questions of each other about methodology and practice. This is a wonderful thing as long as it does not lead to more program standardization. We all know that what works in one institution does not necessarily work in another. And so, if we are sharing information about methodology and practice in order to achieve the basis for creating our own solutions, we are working in the best of both worlds. If we are simply imitating each other, we are volunteering to standardize programs, and thus standardization. We also have business models such as benchmarking. Benchmarking is not necessarily consistent with the way most artists work. Many artists are simply competing with themselves, and in fact each work competes within itself to be the best that it can be as it is being developed and presented. It is hard to be excellent when you are just trying to reach the benchmark. Reliance on sets of peer institutions can also be a force on standardization. There are many other forces that you know as well as I. My point is that we must not blame accreditation for something that accreditation is not doing. Most important of all, we must resist forces and tendencies that lead to a kind of voluntary standardization. When you think about it, this is just too much of a business model for the arts. With a few exceptions, every car in the same price range looks and acts virtually the same. There is not much distinction. Competition can lead to sameness, and sameness can lead us away from the kind of creative context we want to have in our institutions.

I want to close by returning to my opening statement about the need to work together. The arts community in the United States is fairly large and has a significant economy of its own. It has enough presence to exist and, in some cases, to thrive. But the arts community in the United States is not strong enough in the whole scheme of public and private affairs to engage in isolation. There are places and forms of work where achievement is only possible at the individual level. There are places and forms of work where achievement is only possible in groups or in institutions. And there are issues and responsibilities in forms of work that can only be addressed at the national level. The fact that great work in the arts comes from individual activity does not at all preclude the necessity of working institutionally and nationally. We have much to do. We must protect ourselves from counterproductive ideas about the role of the arts in higher education by advancing our own views of what those roles must be. We have tremendous opportunities given the technological advance, the growth in capabilities and capacities in our population, demographic changes, our responsibility to carry forth artistic and intellectual traditions both the old and new, and many other issues that we must work on together as well as separately. We have a national responsibility and accreditation is one way of fulfilling that responsibility. It is not the only way, but it as a powerful way to address a particular area of concern by applying the expertise in the disciplines to the work and advancement of quality in those disciplines.

## **II. The Arts and Institutional Perspectives**

**Carole Brandt**

Karen Wolff has just spoken about the relationship of national issues to the institution. I want to focus on the institution and its relationship to the larger whole in the United States and beyond. Dean Wolff also made a critical point about the nature of education. I want to extend that point to the nature of accreditation. She used the analogy of an automobile. When you go into the showroom to buy a car, you expect that the manufacturer is one hundred percent responsible for the product that you are being shown. It is a machine with certain capabilities, and you expect that machine to fulfill its function under normal conditions. Even though many of our politicians, businessmen, trustees, and others are trying to treat educational institutions as though they were car manufacturers, as Dean Wolff pointed out, the analogy doesn't work at all. The consumer of education, the student, is responsible for at least half of the final product. This truth doesn't need further examples or justifications. We in education know that this is true. The same thing is true of accreditation.

This truth does not mean that those of us responsible for building institutional systems and curricula or accreditation standards and procedures should not be concerned with building the best systems, content, and procedures that we can build. But neither education nor accreditation is a product in the sense that an automobile or a bar of soap or even banking is.

In a few moments Sam Hope is going to brief you on new issues regarding standards and procedures that provide the greatest flexibility for institutions that has ever been available in arts accreditation, and with few exceptions, in any accreditation.

It helps to remember that the primary purpose of the arts accrediting associations is not accreditation for its own sake or for the sake of public relations, but rather accreditation as a means of helping institutions by participating in the larger accreditation framework that is applied to institutions and programs more broadly throughout American higher education.

This goal can only be achieved, however, if the institution and the programs within it determine how they can use accreditation reviews to assist their work. The accrediting association's officers, staff, or commission members cannot make these decisions. Only people at the site can determine what they need to achieve. Ever since I have worked with NAST, I have been impressed with the flexibility of the association in working with institutions on approaches to self-studies, visits, and schedules. But the institution must ask. It must be the prime mover. The associations can only offer options and flexibilities. But they should not and will not impose specific approaches to accreditation reviews.

The accreditation system in the arts is capable of delivering so many things. The institution has the responsibility of determining what it wants and structuring its own effort accordingly. It is our responsibility to take advantage of this opportunity when our programs are reviewed.

Let us turn for a moment to the issue of quality. The accreditation self-study formats ask each institution to address quality from two perspectives: (1) compliance or consistency with the threshold standards of the association and (2) the aspirations for quality that are held by the institution and its programs. This approach gives the institution enormous opportunities to address issues of quality from its own perspective and to gain support for its aspirations through whatever leverage accreditation may provide that institution. If the institution does not approach the question of its own quality aspirations with seriousness and rigor, the accreditation process cannot be as helpful in this regard as it would otherwise be.

The arts accrediting associations do not see the self-study as a take home examination. They see it as an opportunity for institutions to gather together the issues they feel are important to address and to work with them institutionally and programmatically. The accreditation piece of the picture is primarily a support for this effort at the institution and program level.

When you think about it, there are too many different missions, objectives, and approaches to quality for the arts accrediting associations to take any different position. Just as the accrediting associations do not dictate mission, they do not dictate the detailed mission of a self-study exercise, for example. They do provide enough guidelines and formats to produce consistency in reviews, but as is the case with standards, the formats are frameworks, not detailed checklists.

The whole exercise is to help institutions look reflectively and seriously at themselves, putting aside all the promotional postures and image making that go along with our more public responsibilities and our advocacy necessities. The accreditation review is an opportunity for a quiet, in-depth, thoughtful study of the future that engages many people, and, in so doing, usually produces a greater community understanding of issues, needs, potentials, and even scheduling of improvements.

Just like education itself, these features of accreditation will not happen without local leadership. The accreditation procedure can become a simple data collecting exercise. It can be done superficially. Threshold compliance can be documented without a lot of thought or analysis. Or, it can be something else.

As deans, I believe we have the responsibility to ensure that the accreditation process at our institutions is as productive as it can be. As I have already said, the accreditation review can be directed to various purposes. In my own experience both as a visitor and overseeing programs that are being reviewed, self-studies and review procedures have different purposes at different times. The beauty of the arts accreditation approach is that it allows this flexibility with regard to purposes. In fact, each association has a document called "Creating Your Self-Study" which takes the reader through many steps that can be used to determine the best approach for the institution at a particular time.

Sam Hope will speak more about the options and approaches from a technical perspective.

But I want to emphasize and re-emphasize that the arts accreditation system has the means to help you with almost any question or issue. However, you must frame the questions and issues. The accrediting association cannot do this for you. If it were to do this for you, you would lose freedom. You would lose the kind of freedom that is essential to the arts and to institutional autonomy. I will return to autonomy in a moment, but I want to speak a bit more about the relationship of accreditation to planning, and the relationship of both accreditation and planning to quality.

The higher up the administrative ladder one goes, the more one sees both opportunities and limitations. It is clear to all of us that we cannot do everything that we would like to do, or even everything that we think is essential now. We certainly cannot do everything that all of our faculty members would like us to do for them and for our schools and programs. Many of the aspirations that our faculties and we have take many years to bring to fruition. Many in this room have given years of devotion to building projects that have resulted in glorious facilities for the arts throughout the nation. We know that we must plan and plan effectively if we are to have a good roadmap for getting to our destinations. If we are experienced, we know especially that we cannot plan effectively without looking at the relationship between parts and wholes. We cannot plan to do something comprehensively unless we have considered all the pieces that are necessary for the comprehensive result, and more often than we should like to think, we cannot plan for specifics unless we look carefully at the comprehensive picture. Many deans are deeply concerned about issues of size and scope. Is continual growth always the best thing? Should we cut programs that are weak, or should we give them a chance, or should we keep them on the books, lest we need them later? What is the relationship between our size and scope and our current and future resources? What shall we do and not do? What long-term investments are necessary to add something? What resources do we gain for other programs if we cut something?

The accreditation review asks us to consider such questions, not just as individual administrators with certain powers, but institutionally, involving faculty, students, alumni, and many others in questions about the future. Of course, the nature and depth of these involvements with others in questions of this kind are up to the leaders of institutions. But there is no question that accreditation reviews bring a different perspective to people's thinking than unilateral decisions from the top of an institution.

Again, managing the role that accreditation can and will play in particular planning efforts is important for each institution and program. The range of possibilities is great. Each institution must decide for itself.

As deans, we have many responsibilities. One of our responsibilities in accreditation is to ensure that there are appropriate lines of communication about the accreditation process and the accreditation relationship. The arts accrediting associations have described the framework that they are using to communicate with institutions. A document outlining this framework with respect to accreditation and membership issues as well as the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) project, will soon be on the Internet. As deans, we have the responsibility of establishing the kinds of communication we want with the chairs of departments or faculty who have been appointed to serve as the Institutional

Representative of an accredited unit. The Institutional Representative system used by the arts accrediting associations enables clarity and accuracy in communication with institutions. The associations have a huge bookkeeping job. It is simply unbelievable that they are able to deal with so many institutions, more than a thousand, and so much paper with so much accuracy. When an accreditation or reaccreditation review is forthcoming for your college or school, please establish, with the Institutional Representative, protocols for communicating about every aspect of the accreditation process. The procedures are public, available on the Internet, and there are no other procedures. By reading the procedures, you may see exactly what is expected and recommended. In special circumstances about communication, the associations are willing to work with you.

Sam Hope will probably say this himself, but I want to say it as well. Please do not sit and fret or be concerned about one or more of the arts accrediting associations. If you have a concern, or you hear others express a concern, the next step is to call the National Office and discuss the issue. There is so much rumor, misinformation, confusion, and misunderstanding about accreditation in general, that we find immediate phone calls and honest questions the best means of resolving issues quickly. Many concerns that individuals have are ill founded. They are worried about things they do not need to worry about. The arts accrediting associations cannot address a problem if they do not know there is a problem. Consistent with what I have been saying, if you have a review coming up in the next year or so and you have a specific issue that you believe the accreditation review could help you and your colleagues address, please feel free to talk with the National Office staff or simply include it in the issues you wish to consider in the Self-Study.

In conclusion, I want to talk about citizenship. We Americans talk a great deal about the blessings of freedom. We want to preserve our freedom as individuals, businesses, private non-profit organizations, states and localities, and so forth. But we know that we cannot have freedom by simply demanding it for ourselves. Our freedom depends on joining with others to create institutions that protect our freedom. Individual freedom depends in large part on every individual being concerned about the freedom of others. We have to be concerned not only about the freedom of others, but the welfare of others. We have to pull together as individuals, in small groups, in large groups, and as a nation comprehensively to address certain issues. This has never been clearer than in the recent events on the Gulf Coast. Mutual effort and reciprocity are absolutely critical. Citizenship means participating in mutual support and reciprocity.

As I have just been saying, the arts accrediting associations are deeply respectful of the autonomy of each institution and program. In fact, the whole accreditation approach is structured to support that autonomy, that independence, that ability to be locally creative, to have support for individual and group effort to build the capabilities of students, and to further the cause of the arts disciplines and the arts as a whole. The associations have strong policy statements about their respect for autonomy. There is a long list in the handbook of each association of things that are absolutely the prerogative of each institution. The standards of the associations also make this perfectly clear. Accreditation is not about the destruction of autonomy any more than acting in a group effort to help

others is a destruction of individuality. Accreditation is about the individual and community relationship. It is about the institutional programmatic relationships with the arts in higher education and the arts professions in general. We do not give up our individuality by working with others, and by being prepared to meet unforeseen dangers or even emergencies.

Preparedness is much on our minds these days. Karen Wolff made a strong statement about the need to look beyond wealth and prestige for protection in certain kinds of circumstances. We do not know what is around the corner in higher education. We do know that over the last 18 months, our Executive Director and Associate Director have been engaged with others in a battle royal with regard to reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act. They have worked countless hours to protect the freedom of all of higher education. At this moment, it appears that they and their numerous colleagues have been successful. As the Higher Education Act reauthorization was being started, many suggested that reauthorization in this round would be easy. A number of experienced professionals indicated that there were few problems, and that Congress would probably stick closely to the present statutory language. In May of 2004, a bombshell burst over Washington as the responsible subcommittee of the House of Representatives reported its bill. Since that time, papers and committee meetings and vast policy analytical efforts have been undertaken to show the dangerous ramifications of many features of that legislation. Our staff members have been working primarily on the accreditation issues, but many others have been working on other issues in the bill. The perspective of the arts has been critical in helping to gain an understanding of the need for flexibility. You will hear more about the substance of these issues in a moment, but I want to say unequivocally, that I am thankful to all of our colleagues, past and present, that have built up the national arts accreditation system so that we have the opportunity and the possibility of being at the table and having the opportunity to fight from our perspective when the freedom of higher education is under attack. There are many other times in our history when the arts accrediting associations have been effective. The very existence of the standards has prevented a lot of adventurism in state boards of higher education. It has prevented people who don't understand how the arts are organized in education from doing serious damage to institutions, programs, or even the nature of the degrees we offer.

The arts accrediting associations are a means for expressing citizenship. Of course, they are not the only means of doing so, but they are the means for doing so in critically important areas of doing our work. We need to be together in articulating the fundamental standards for our disciplines, not just for ourselves, not just for reviews, but for broader purposes. We need to have the commitment on the scale that we have in order to be effective in protecting our interests and advancing our cause in certain critical education policy areas.

Any of us who feel fortunate or wealthy in an academic institutional sense, have an extra responsibility to participate as a citizen in this way. We cannot tell what is next. We do not know what challenges the arts will face over the next five years. We do know that because we have the arts accrediting associations, we have certain capabilities for addressing issues in certain areas that otherwise we would not have. Institutions that

participate in the arts accrediting efforts, and those that don't, share the benefits that accrue from the presence and effectiveness of these organizations.

I want to speak about citizenship in one other dimension before turning the microphone over to our Executive Director. Because of long and distinguished service of several of our National Office staff members, there is a tendency of some of us to think of the associations in terms of the service of these individuals. Without diminishing for a moment the importance of these services, it is extremely important to remember who owns arts accreditation. The member institutions do. It is extremely important to remember who conducts and makes the accreditation decisions. Representatives of member institutions of the respective accrediting associations conduct visits and make accreditation decisions. It is important to remember who sets the standards. After vast consultation with the fields of practice, faculties, institutions, and many others, the Institutional Representatives of the member institutions of each association vote to approve the standards. The standards are essentially developed and approved by us, for us. The accrediting organizations are not the president; they are not the Executive Director or the National Office staff. The accrediting organizations represent the consensus position, the common effort of many arts programs and schools in higher education. This is another reason why citizenship is important. Because we own it, we have a responsibility to work on it and work with it. It is the same issue exactly as the responsibility to vote.

Indeed, these concepts of institutional citizenship are key to creating and maintaining an appropriate and supportive national framework that can help us advance and protect us when we need protection.

The arts accrediting associations also have exhibited a traditional penchant for seeking improvement. Sam Hope will talk with us now about current issues at the national higher education level and also with respect to current efforts and opportunities in the arts accrediting associations.

### **III. The Arts Accrediting Associations' Perspective**

**Samuel Hope**

A presentation of this kind is always a challenge. So much has happened, and so much is happening, that it is hard to choose what should be reported and analyzed. Let me start with several large issues. American higher education, and indeed American education and all levels, is in a critical time. I believe that the nature of this particular critical time is significantly different than the nature of previous critical times. For now, the concern is not just about resources and their deployment or basic degree and delivery structures, or even academic content. We seem to be arriving continuously at major questions about what education, and particularly higher education, is for. As we all know, the United States is living with tremendous anxieties about the future. Our nation is carrying a heavy load in many respects. In one dimension, there are deep concerns about our economic future. This concern translates into concerns about education, because education is the basis for developing the knowledge and skills necessary to create and advance on all sorts of levels in all sorts of fields. It is always productive to be concerned about the future of

one's national education system. However, it is counterproductive to be concerned about it in the wrong way. Here in the United States, we have built a great system of education. It is based on opportunity. It has provided more opportunity for more people to gain access to higher education than in any other nation in the world. Many other societies are imitating us now with regard to opening up education opportunities, especially at the postsecondary level. Our education system has also been decentralized with a tremendous amount of local control. We have taken the same approach to education that we have taken to business. We have tried to get the best experts we could get or develop to build and operate the system as they saw fit with minimum interference and regulation. The result has been what is now referred to as "empowerment." In government and in the private sector, creative energies have been unleashed. We have built educational institutions and capabilities. We have built systems like accreditation to provide oversight without undue interference. We have relied on professional judgment and reciprocity and mutual accountability. Of course, everything is not perfect. All of us see the need for many improvements. But by and large, in an overall sense, the system has been extremely productive and successful.

We have become wealthy as a nation and along with wealth we have in some ways lost sight of what has made us wealthy. We are fearful about competition, rightly worried about the large numbers of our population that do not gain even a basic education, and concerned about adjustments in the cost of education to the consumer without facing squarely the reason for these cost increases. We are in a society with little patience and many desires.

All of these and many other factors are combining to create a critical time for higher education where fundamental values seem to be more and more at stake. Fear is not the best emotion for developing wise decisions. When fear is combined with a certain kind of leisure that wealth produces, there is a tendency to use fear to engage in the luxury of disaffection and faction. We see this in our national politics and we see it with respect to policies for higher education.

Since the beginning of education reform in 1984, we have been building everyday toward a philosophy that replaces independence, mutual reciprocity, collegiality, professionalism, respect for highly developed expertise, and mutual respect with another set of values. This set of values includes suspicion, denigration, unhealthy competition, the imposition of objectives, and reductionist values about success. We are told that education should be run more like a business, but I know of no successful business that constantly denigrates the efforts of those who are trying to accomplish the work of the business. Of course, there are problems that need to be addressed. Of course, we need to ensure that students gain basic literacy and numeracy. Of course, there are financial and other kinds of abuses that occur in a large system with many players and institutions. But somehow we have turned from being generically positive and specifically negative to being generically negative and specifically positive. It is as though people have forgotten the values and the work that built the system, seeming to feel that those values are outmoded and that a more directive approach is necessary and appropriate. I want to make clear here that I am not speaking about the present federal administration. These issues have been building through several administrations, Republican and Democrat.

They are deeply entrenched in many politicians and individuals with strong influences on education. You all know that what I am saying is true, because you live closer to it every day than I do—the proliferation of reporting requirements; the manic focus now on accountability. I have said on other occasions that total accountability is a feature of totalitarian societies. We get far more done when we focus on responsibility rather than accountability. Accountability is not the whole; responsibility is the whole. By making accountability the whole, we devalue the kind of responsibility that actually produces work of quality.

These are huge issues beyond the powers of the arts accrediting associations or ICFAD to resolve. These are contextual situations that we must live with for some time to come. These values come out into our arena in various ways. At the national level, we have been battling for months about the federal Higher Education Act reauthorization. We have done everything we possibly could to protect higher education from ideas that would hurt it. I do not believe that the authors of these ideas intend to hurt higher education. Indeed, when faced with cogent arguments about the ramifications of their proposals, senators and congressmen on both sides of the aisle have backed away from dangerous positions. They have seen the larger interest and acted accordingly in many cases. They are not sitting around plotting to do damage. To the contrary, they think their proposals are accomplishing something positive. They don't realize that their proposals are coming from this new ethos of suspicion and mistrust. They fail to recognize the ramifications in resources, particularly time and money that new regulations and new reporting requirements create for institutions and programs throughout higher education.

One of the biggest battles we have fought and seemed to have won is over the public disclosure of accreditation results. Of course, we disclose accreditation results now. We say whether an institution is accredited or not. Accreditation means that an institution has been reviewed by peers against a set of standards and those standards have been met insofar as the reviewers could make a determination after a thorough study. All accrediting organizations that I know of have no prohibition against an institution's sharing its self-study or its materials with anyone that it wishes to share them with. In some states, the materials are open. But this openness is on an institutional or local decision basis. Other kinds of disclosure about accreditation are decided by accrediting agencies through procedures that involve their institutions and professions in determining what should be done. Proposals in Congress that we have defeated would have turned accreditation into a public relations exercise and a legal nightmare. What would happen to the system if every time an accrediting agency sent a letter to an institution asking a question about standards compliance, the agency was obligated by federal law to provide a summary of that action for the public? In the way the arts accreditation organizations operate, the commissions regularly defer actions from six months to a year to allow for a dialog between the institution and the commission about standards compliance. We do this to avoid sending teams back to the institution. Our system of deferral, which is efficient, fair, and confidential, would be destroyed. We would not even be able to ask an institution a question without that question being made public. I do not want to take all of my time today to explain to you more of the terrible ramifications of such a policy. But it is clear, with a few moments reflection, that such an approach would not serve the public as proponents were claiming, but rather would destroy the accreditation system's ability

to help institutions and promote improvement. It would replace collegiality, dialog, and mutual reciprocity with fear and hostility. Accreditation would move from being a peer-review, professionally driven exchange of views to being regulatory and punitive. The first time an accreditation visitor was sued for results that damaged the public relations image of an institution, other visitors would decline to serve. In addition, such a policy would bring particular disadvantages to institutions that need the most help. You've already seen the effect of disclosure policies in some of the regional associations on historically black colleges and universities. In fact, it is the results of some of these adventures that caused the United Negro College Fund to join with many of us in successfully opposing these legislative proposals. As time has gone on, more and more individuals have come to see the extreme danger to higher education from moving in this direction. It is more than possible that we need to do more to help students understand accreditation and its meaning to them when they are making choices about higher education. Consumer information is important. But consumer information at the expense of a system that enables diplomatic, confidential efforts to look at issues and problems and solve them as quickly as possible is a price too high to pay.

There are other problems with the Higher Education Act, and there are other matters that we, and others, worked on. But there is nothing so threatening to the freedom of institutions and programs than this threat to the ability of accreditation to work confidentially and thoughtfully. Accreditation cannot become gladiatorial and be effective. It is not a branch of attack journalism or the torts bar. I want to remind everyone here that what I am talking about applies not only to arts accreditation, but to all accreditation. It would apply to regional accreditation first of all.

This is just one example of the kinds of dangers that are out there in the policy world that we must be ready to face and work on to protect our institutions. Without being self-referential at all, you should know that on this particular point, it was not the institutional accrediting associations that saw the danger at first. It was specialized accreditors and the lobbyists for the major higher education associations in Washington. Remembering what Karen Wolff and Carole Brandt have just told you, if the accreditation system in this country is broken down or turned into an instrument of regulatory coercion, the freedom of your institution and your programs is at stake. It does not matter how famous your institution is, how wealthy it is, or how effective it is.

Let me turn now to two important issues within the associations themselves. These are (1) the comprehensive standards review now underway in all four associations and (2) the new options and approaches to Self-Study that were unveiled a couple of years ago that are now being used by many institutions.

The standards review is extremely important because the associations are engaged in a comprehensive review of their standards as a whole. The review began with Graduate Standards, is now proceeding to Undergraduate Standards, will go on to Non-Degree Granting Standards and Operational Standards, and finally we will return to a look at the whole based on the revisions made to the parts. We are extremely grateful to the ICFAD National Office for keeping you informed of the postings on our Web sites regarding the standards drafts as they are developed. As has already been said, standards development

is a part of citizenship. Everyone's voice is important. We want thoughtful, considered opinion from a broad range of institutions and individuals. The standards as they exist now are the result of thousands of people over the years working to make them appropriate and effective.

Here are a few things we know already about the Standards Review. The standards will be reformatted to facilitate their use on the Internet. We will do everything possible to reduce redundancies while keeping together material that needs to be together for ease of use in electronic format. We know already that the standards will provide many new options for institutions seeking to develop new kinds of programs, to experiment, and to build academic and disciplinary combinations in new ways. Accreditation is not now and has never been a barrier to institutional innovation. In fact, the accrediting agencies have supported the development of many new fields over the years, being the first to give a national sanction to experimental efforts. The arts accrediting associations are not afraid of experimentation; they welcome it. We are grateful for the comment we have received thus far from fine arts deans. Every comment we receive is taken seriously. Comment received thus far has improved the documents. We are holding hearings at Annual Meetings, distributing drafts over the Internet with notice to all affected constituencies including ICFAD. We covet your attention and support as we move through this process. As Carole Brandt said, the standards are owned by the arts in higher education. They are our standards. Participate. Encourage your faculty and administrators to participate and to review the standards drafts carefully. The Web site contains orientation material and the kinds of questions that readers and reviewers should ask themselves as they look at the effectiveness, viability, and appropriateness of the standards statements. We want to complete the standards review process expeditiously, but we are not in so much of a hurry that we are rushing to conclusions. Due to the timing of annual meetings, the fields of dance, art and design, and music have draft revisions of both graduate and undergraduate standards on the Internet now. The response to these drafts is due December 15, 2005. They will be the subject of hearings at the annual meeting of each respective association.

Let me turn briefly to the Self-Study options. For many years, the associations published a standard format for Self-Study documents. The associations all indicated that this format could be revised or amended by institutions so long as the major issues of Self-Study were covered. Now the associations have three formats: the standard one, and two new ones. The two new ones are called portfolio and strategic analysis. The standard format has also been streamlined. Again, although there are three formats, institutions are invited to create other formats if doing so will better suit their needs. The National Office staff will work with institutions that wish to create new formats. The portfolio and strategic analysis formats consider Self-Study from two different perspectives. The portfolio format guides analysis from the whole to the parts and the strategic analysis format does the reverse. Both formats focus on both tactical and strategic considerations about the future. The strategic analysis format is intended to facilitate future considerations in specific programs of the unit, the acting program, the composition program, the fashion design program, the library, whatever the institution wishes to designate a program. The individuals engaged in that program are asked to look carefully at their future, using parameters determined largely by the institution. The Self-Study

formats are also designed to avoid duplication of effort in the compilation of materials. Both new formats rely on portfolios of management documents. Instead of asking institutions to compile excerpts of many documents into one document, a Self-Study, we are now asking institutions to compile a certain set of documents that should be readily available without extra effort beyond simply collecting them together. We call this a management documents portfolio. It is hard to imagine how any administrator of any unit could function without having these documents ready at hand. The portfolio has utility far beyond accreditation and can be easily updated as documents change. The other portfolio to consider keeping on a regular basis has to do with the structures and basic features of curricular offerings. Most institutions currently accredited have this portfolio already developed in one form or another. It used to be Section II of the old Self-Study format. By updating Section II, either at the time of reaccreditation or periodically as changes are made to curricula, there should be no need for recompiling this information during the Self-Study process. In other words, for institutions being reaccredited, most of the time and focus of the Self-Study for most of the faculty and staff should be on strategic and tactical analysis of issues deemed important by the institution for present and future consideration. Workshops on these formats are being delivered at the Annual Meetings of the associations. The National Office staff is ready to provide assistance as institutions work toward their decision about the type of format they would like to use to accomplish their purposes in Self-Study.

This approach to Self-Study gives institutions a great deal of freedom, but along with the freedom comes the responsibility to make decisions about goals and objectives for the Self-Study and accreditation review. The quality of the accreditation review, therefore, is to a great extent the responsibility of individuals and groups at the institution. Institutions that are spending a few hours on creating their goals and objectives and planning to reach them through Self-Study are finding the review for membership or continuation of membership extremely rewarding and productive. We are gratified that these new formats seem to have caught on so quickly, and that they seem to be effective both in helping the institutions and in serving the purposes of an accreditation review from the perspective of the accrediting association. No matter which format is chosen, the same outline is used for the visitor's report. And, the commission applies the same standards in the same ways irrespective of how the materials are presented.

Before closing, I want to make one other strong point. Many of our institutions, especially the larger ones, are simply inundated with review responsibilities. The climate that I spoke about at the beginning is producing accountability overkill. The arts accrediting associations have said for many years, and they are still saying, that they are willing to work with institutions to minimize reporting responsibilities. We are willing and able to use documents that have been developed for other purposes. A major reason for developing more published options for Self-Study is to accommodate and incorporate the kinds of planning that some institutions are already doing. I spoke with a member institution just a few weeks ago. They were planning to use a combination of the portfolio and strategic analysis formats in order to build on an institutional analysis they had just done in the past year. They felt that through their institutional process, they had already done a thorough study of their individual programs and their conditions and aspirations. They planned to use this completed work as a basis for the NASM Self-Study which they wanted to focus on

compiling these separate findings into a more comprehensive strategic look at the future of the institution as a whole. In other words, they felt that their work for the institution had accomplished the first part of the strategic analysis format, and they would use the NASM review to accomplish the second part. They had done the parts, now they wanted to assemble them to make the whole. We were able to help them incorporate the work they had done, save them a lot of time, and focus their energy on something that needed to be done next in their opinion. This is what we hope will happen in the reviews of all institutions.

In closing, let me say that time is always becoming more and more precious. The time pressures that we face impact us all. We must try to save as much time as possible, but not at the expense of quality. Unnecessary time pressures are eroding our freedom, they are denying us the opportunity to exercise responsibility, they are affecting quality, and they are certainly affecting the world of accreditation policy and action. The arts accrediting associations are realistic and they are also committed to operating accreditation for the arts consistent with the nature of the arts themselves. The arts live on freedom, they create through the exercise of artistic and scholarly responsibility, they are passionately concerned about quality, and fortunately, due to the vision of many of our forbearers, they have an accreditation system to support them. We hope that you will never hesitate to let us know if there is any way that we may assist you or that we may answer any question or concern.

By continuing our efforts together, we can continue to build the strength of the arts in higher education both nationally and in individual institutions. Let us continue building up the arts. The prospects for the future are rich and exciting if we will keep our energies focused and centered on common goals.