

CSHSE Accreditation – A Challenge Worth the Effort!

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What is accreditation?

- “Accreditation passes a verdict on whether programs, degrees or institutions meet certain standards or requirements.” (European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2001)
- Accreditation assures academic integrity in higher education.
- Accreditation is a form of quality assurance.
- The Council for Standards in Human Service Education (CSHSE) is the only accrediting body for Human Service postsecondary education degree programs. The CSHSE accreditation standards contain the essential elements of best practices in Human Service education. (<http://www.cshse.org>)
- CSHSE received recognition from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in 2014. CHEA is a national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation. (Franyo, 2014). (<http://www.cshse.org/newsletter.html>)

Why consider accreditation?

The accreditation process provides Human Service degree programs a thorough unbiased, external review based upon defined, validated academic standards necessary for student, program and institutional success.

The process of accreditation requires the institution, college and department to conduct a thorough review of institutional, college and departmental program policies and procedures, curricula, learning objectives, and validated student outcomes.

Students graduating from an accredited degree program are provided the opportunity to take the HS-BCP national examination at a reduced price and prior to graduation.

What is the justification for a university program seeking accreditation in budget cutting times?

During times of economic difficulty, institutions of higher education often seek cost reductions through budget cutting. Decisions regarding which programs to cut/reduce and which programs to maintain are generally made through a data driven, transparent process based upon reliable measurements and validation.

The budgetary analysis of academic programs is primarily based upon data produced by the programs themselves consisting of validated measurements surrounding program quality, academic validity and vitality, student success as well as the program's ability to address student, community, state, regional and national educational needs within the discipline.

The accreditation process requires program applicants to include data performance surrounding: program/curricular quality, academic validity/vitality, student success and program ability to address community, state, regional and national education needs within the degree program.

What comes first – assessment or the self-study process?

Since assessment is conducted yearly and accreditation is conducted every five years, assessment will come first.

Since the accreditation Self-Study requires enrollment, budgetary, student success and employment data as well as staffing patterns, and curricular documents, the assessment data will assist programs in preparing the Self-Study to include five year trend data.

This approach provides the academic program an embedded five year cycle intertwining institutional and program data accompanied by curricular documents and trends including student success patterns, all of which are essential to both assessment and accreditation.

How does assessment benefit the accreditation process?

Regionally accredited postsecondary institutions are required to conduct program assessment for each of academic unit/program a yearly bases. Each program has the flexibility to write their own assessment plan.

Programs either seeking accreditation for the first time, or seeking reaccreditation can benefit from reviewing the CSHSE standards and designing their program assessment plan around the major data sets required in the Self Study. This will also meet the requirements producing 5 year data trends.

What are the items to consider prior to beginning the self-study process?

- Budget
- Faculty availability (to draft sections of self-study)
- Identifying an editor
- Establishing a timeframe for completion of the overall study as well as individual components
- Designating a “leader” of the process
- Allocating staff time for assembling self-study (including electronic links, etc.)
- Course curricula – current or needing revisions?
- Designating someone to coordinate the site visit logistics

Can your university and your program be transparent?

“Colleges and universities should use the accreditation process to conceptualize and institutionalize transparency.” (Kzyzkowski & Kinser, 2014)

- What are the challenges to being transparent?
 - FERPA regulations require universities and programs to protect student data. FERPA violations can result in sanctions against the university. Therefore one real challenge to program transparency is student data collection. Institutions and programs must be vigilant regarding data collection and distribution of student related information. STUDENT SPECIFIC IDENTIFIERS MUST BE REMOVED.

What does accreditation mean to students?

- Accreditation is one of the criteria by which students select the university they will attend.
- Accreditation allows Human Service students to take the CCE examination to become a *Human Service Board Certified Practitioner (HS-BCP)*

What are some of the side benefits of accreditation?

- Information required in the self study can be used for program assessments at most institutions.
- Information required in the self study can be used for strategic planning and curricular modifications.
- The accreditation standards help define learning goals by course.
- Completing the self study functionally completes the program's 5-year academic plan.
- Students enrolled in an accredited program can take the HS-BCP test in their final semester and at a reduced cost.

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