

**COUNCIL OF REGIONAL  
ACCREDITING  
COMMISSIONS**

September 21, 2006

Middle States  
Commission on Higher  
Education

The Commission on  
Institutions of Higher  
Education,  
New England Association  
of Schools and Colleges

Higher Learning  
Commission of  
the North Central  
Association of  
Colleges and Schools

Northwest Commission  
on Colleges and  
Universities

Commission on  
Colleges of the Southern  
Association of Colleges  
and Schools

Accrediting Commission  
for Community and  
Junior Colleges,  
Western Association of  
Schools and Colleges:

Accrediting Commission  
for Senior Colleges and  
Universities,  
Western Association of  
Schools and Colleges

David E. Shulenburg  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
NASULGC, A Public Universities Association  
1307 New York Avenue, Suite 400  
Washington, D.C. 20005-4722

Dear Dr. Shulenburg:

The Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions appreciated the opportunity to discuss with you the NASULGC and AASCU paper, "Toward a Public Universities and Colleges Voluntary System of Accountability for Undergraduate Education (VSA)", at our meeting of September 9, 2006. The regional accreditors recognize that the ideas and plans in the report represent a significant commitment by public higher education institutions to improve the information available to students and other institutional stakeholders. We commend NASULGC and AASCU for initiating this work and hope, with you, that it is successful in demonstrating that there are valid and reliable common measures of student learning that can be used across similar institutions.

Accreditors examine information about student learning as part of the comprehensive evaluation of an institution. The regional accrediting commissions have all changed their accreditation standards to require that institutions engage in assessment of student learning and use the results of that assessment to continuously improve the quality of education offered by those institutions. However, the regional accreditors have not required specific assessment methodologies or instruments. Rather, we have asked each institution to identify meaningful assessment strategies in the context of its institutional mission and programs.

The regional accreditors believe that the decisions about appropriate common assessment strategies are best made by institutions. The regional accreditors will certainly accept assessment strategies and data developed for purposes of the VSA project as part of an overall evidentiary portfolio when participating institutions undergo accreditation reviews.

The Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions will appreciate a continuing dialogue with NASULGC and AASCU as this innovative project develops. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to discuss this project and best wishes to all of you engaged in it.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.  
Chair