

APPENDIX I – MEETING TRANSCRIPT OF THE SYNTHESIZERS PANEL

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: I just want welcome everyone here today. I think at the onset I would just like to highlight some of the items on the agenda to clarify what we're intending to accomplish today.

We have initially, a panel of synthesizers, and we've asked them to help organize the material that we heard yesterday and present to us their thoughts about the large massive amount of information in a more digestible format. And then we are going to have questions and dialogue with the synthesizers about that. And ultimately as the day goes on, later it will be the task of the NACIQI to develop what will become an agenda for the subcommittee to look at further and ultimately prepare for a June meeting where we expect, instead of the wide array of topics that we discussed yesterday, to have a narrower focus on those items that we think are worthy of our attention and ultimately hope to make recommendations to the

Secretary based on.

So that's what we've asked the synthesizers to do. And then the agenda setting exercise later is a public meeting and we will be conducting it right here, and you are welcome to sit into watch that. I think the description on the agenda is an apt one. We will be developing an informal draft set of focused areas for further consideration and recommendation, and in essence, putting the issues into a more narrow framework again for our subcommittee to work on in the interim. And we will be reaching out to the remainder of our committee.

Our committee is not fully in attendance here, and we will be soliciting their feedback based on the written materials and based on the information that- we've received. And that will form the basis for our agenda at our June NACIQI meeting.

So, with that, I want to thank -- and any other further comments from anybody -- we will thank the --Yes, Melissa. Go right ahead.

MS. LEWIS: Yes, just a quick

administrative announcement. There are nine members here today. For the record, Benjamin Allen, Brit Kirwan, Daniel Klaich, Earl Lewis, Aron Shimeles, Larry Vanderhoef, Carolyn Williams, Frank Wu, and Federico Zaragoza are unable to join us. And I hope that everyone saw the handouts in the back of room and helped themselves.

I would like to thank everyone for attending today, also.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: Thank you.

So with that, we'll ask the synthesizers, please to -- each of you can make a presentation, and then we will open it up for questions from the Committee.

MR. EWELL: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Chair.

I've been delegated as their lead batter on this. We've been debating on what synthesizer actually means. And near as we can make out, it's sort of taking all of these ideas and putting them in a blender and then shoving them into a Jello mold and then maybe something good to eat will come out.

Actually, I think that the synthesis in many ways has already been done, and I want to thank the gentlemen of the press, Doug, from Inside Higher Education, and Eric and David from The Chronicle. I thought that those were excellent stories. And I think that they captured some of the main ideas quite well. And I would commend them if you haven't seen those, those stories -- members of the Committee -- go back and look at them, because I think they did a good job.

Let me make a couple of initial comments. First, to frame things and then to identify what I think were a couple of the key themes or key ideas that you might want to look at. It was captured again in the press reports, but I think that the first thing that I would start with is the admonition, "do no harm".

This is an incredibly complex set of things that has got a lot of moving parts. It is very difficult to change something in one part of the triad, or of the regulatory environment, without doing damage somewhere else. I'm not saying, don't

change, but I think that you need to put it through the lens of "what are the consequences of making a change in some part of the system?"

That said, what I tried to do -- at least a little bit in starting out yesterday in sketching the very long history of these relationships in the world of accreditation -- is that accreditation is a very robust system. It actually has stood the test of time and even though it isn't the best system, as people have said, it nevertheless has persisted; it's doing good in the improvement arena, and so on.

I also think that we have a problem in high education generally, and I think it's true in this arena as well, that I like to label an "additive bias". We have a tendency to add stuff without taking anything away, and that leads to an accretion of more and more regulations, and more and more things to do, with less and less time to do it.

So that leads to the first thing that I think needs to happen. We need to thoroughly -- and several people yesterday told us about that -- need to thoroughly map out the current context in the

current system. The entire triad. Who is doing what? Are they good at doing it? Is it the appropriate function for them? And so on.

I was very struck by Kevin Carey's comments yesterday, which again the press picked up, and some of the best new ideas, are to say, maybe there are things that accreditation is being asked to do, that accreditation is not equipped to do, and that the Federal government should do. Or that some other actor or another third party process should deal with.

I think that that was a very good thing to have said, and what it needs is though a real thorough mapping out of what goes on. I think the Feds are also -- the Federal government -- also is in a very good position to fund research on all of this.

We had some good points in the Richard Arum discussion about research. Cliff Adelman, in his usual eloquent way, was pleading for the longitudinal studies. Cliff sometimes gets in his own way, but I think that he is absolutely right, that what we need is much more data about how students move from here

to there, and the Feds, the Federal government, also has been extraordinarily effective in being able to map data standards, the kinds of reporting requirements that institutions and other members of the community need to abide by. And I think that that authority ought to be exercised a bit more.

Now that said, a couple of core ideas, specific things, to ponder before I turn it over to my colleagues. We had some good discussion about the distinction between "minimum standards" and "aspirational standards" -- was Kevin's word -- but we've also had this distinction, "consumer protection" on the minimalist side versus an improvement agenda, and so on.

Basically, the best way to think about this is, in some ways, was the distinction that was made between quality assurances in other sectors -- say consumer products. We have Underwriters Laboratory, which basically does a basic distinction, "will it kill you?" you know, it's a basic minimum standards kind of approach, to Consumer Reports, which is much more nuance and multi-faceted and so

on.

I think that we can accommodate that distinction within the same process. There are several examples out there. The SACS difference between the Death Squad and the QEP, the WASC Senior Commission distinction between the preparatory visit, or the capacity review, and the Educational Effectiveness Review. But I think that that needs to be explored further, and we don't explain it very well. I think that that is another thing that's an issue.

Now that said, the second point is that accreditation is simply not well understood. I think that that was loud and clear yesterday, that we need some really basic kinds of one-page elevator speech, kinds of things that would set off essentially what it is that we are about here. I was struck by Milt Greenberg's "we can't draw the diagram", we can't figure it out in that kind of way. And I think we need to pay attention to that.

Thirdly, I think there--it was about every third speaker that mentioned the notion of levels of

accreditation; there might be some way of distinguishing from the basic accredited status to gold star, or three stars -- I mean that was in the LEED certification. That was in a whole lot of the things that we dealt with.

Now, one of the -- and I think also, you were asked if that applies to NACIQI's judgments too, that maybe there is something more nuanced that you could do in terms of providing feedback to the organizations that you take a look at.

I'm very fond of the UK's quality assurance mechanism. And they have multiple levels, but it's an interesting way of putting it. They talk about levels of confidence. Essentially, almost the insurance or risk analysis way of thinking about things. How much confidence do we have in the report that this university is putting forward?

Finally, I think there were plenty of pieces of advice about how to discipline the process. That really, it's not so much that we are doing bad things, it's that we are not doing very systematically. And the accreditors need to take a

look at the alignment of standards and language.

This would also help the public communication. There was some talk about rubrics, and ways to come to judgment in a more systematic way, and team training. I think there is a huge conversation to be had about data and metrics, because I think that it's quite possible to conceive of an accreditation system or a review system that is much more data focused, particularly data around things like, retention and completion rates, and hopefully eventually about student learning outcomes -- although it was said that we're not quite there yet. But we certainly need to talk about this-- and not just the measurement, but the actual setting of some kind of standard.

I mean, Kevin was, I think, eloquent in saying, "well we don't know what the right answer is, as far as time to degree, but 11 years is too long," that somewhere along the line the accreditors need to make a judgment about absolute levels of performance.

Finally, let me make something -- make a point about the context of reauthorization. I'm not

sure how much of this should be in the law. I think that it really is in many ways turned back to the folks in the audience. It's up the community to reform itself, and it's up to you to remind them that they need to do that. But I think that these are not necessarily solutions that legislation are going to - - is going to follow.

I've seen a lot of this. I've been through three of these kinds of moves back to first principles. I've seen them fail. I feel good about this one, because I think that I see a lot more of the leadership of institutions in higher education beginning to say, "we need to step up to the plate and really take responsibility."

I'll turn it over to Sandy.

MS. BAUM: So, Peter said that very well, but you asked for three of us so you will hear it three times, and there will be some repetition.

I think that the strong thing, and certainly Peter said this, and certainly I read this in the press this morning too, is that whatever the strengths and weaknesses of the current system, the

solution is not more government responsibility for accreditation, per se, or increased regulation of the system. So, that just seems really critical in thinking about how you approach this.

There seems to be general comfort, with some strong exceptions, with the basic structure of the accreditation system, but discomfort with some its outcomes. And I think thinking about how those two things put together is important; students aren't learning enough, the process doesn't differentiate enough among institutions of different types and qualities, and some question about whether the benefits outweigh the costs. But defining those problems is one step, and figuring out what the Federal government's role should be in solving those problems, is a very separate step.

I think I heard a strong consensus that if there are problems relating to academic outcomes, those needs to be solved by the institutions, by the community, by other constituencies, not by the Federal government. That the government should not be study specific standards, or second-guessing the

judgments about individual institutions, but that there need to be clear fundamental principles established and there is some sense that there are some things going on that don't seem to fit anybody's articulated principles.

There was some, I think, support for the idea of restructuring the accreditation process, but certainly, no consensus on how, if you were going to do that -- I mean -- what I mean by that is the bodies, not the basic idea as to who has responsibility, but there was certainly sentiment by a number of people that the geographical division is anachronistic and maybe should be changed. There was a suggestion that the for-profit institutions need a separate focus. There was a suggestion that there may be different missions, or what would correspond to different accrediting organizations or processes.

And I think the big thing that I heard was that maybe accreditation should not be the mechanism for institutions qualifying for Federal Student Aid. That we are talking about some different things; that academic practices and policies of colleges are not

government territory. That absolutely, we don't want standardization of these measures of these outcomes, but that the financial responsibility of the government may be something else in terms of Federal Student Aid.

As Peter said, I think that another line that I heard drawn by many people was the line between a minimal standard and the need for improvement. And that they are too mushed together, that we need to be able to say something about minimal standards, but we can't stop with that -- we need to focus on that. And that peer review is very important for the improvement process, and that that's not something that the government would in any way, you know, should intervene in more, or regulate more, although there are many suggestions for these multiple grades of accreditation.

The current system does seem to focus on minimum standards instead of improvement and excellence, and again, not ranking of institutions. And I think there is some concern about how multiple grades would lead to more rankings, but a consensus

that we do need something more subtle and differentiating.

So, I heard strong sentiment for drawing a line between the accreditation process that is the assessment of academic quality, and the financial aid eligibility and the stewardship of Federal Financial Aid funds, and consumer protection fraud. And that's not really about self-improvement; that's a separate process. It's not about academic programs, although it is, of course, about outcomes. It's not that easy to draw the line, but it's certainly seems to be possible.

One of the issues I think in terms of categories, that I think is important to remember, was something that came out strongly in Richard Arum's comments -- although not so much in the discussions of his findings -- and that is, what he said about, in every institution there are students that are succeeding, and that the averages are not necessarily representative of the numbers -- it's not that you can say, that these institutions are great and these are not. And that thinking about that in

terms of rating institutions overall is very important; that institutions do some things well for some people, but not for everyone.

So the government role, in terms of consumer protection and thinking about whether institutions meet minimum standards for financial aid eligibility, may be separate. Many people said, look, we are giving accreditation too much to do, it's not in their territory. Think separately about institutions that meet the criteria and are giving students what they are buying, consumer protection. And information seems to be a part of that too, that the government has a role in protecting consumers through providing more information. But also, a caution, that there are some things that we don't measure very well, like learning outcomes, but also, like graduation rates. And that we have to be very careful about dictating the provision of very specific information when we don't have good metrics, and when there may be very much unattended consequences, and increased confusion by asking for specific information.

So, I guess, overall I would say that I think that one of your tasks is to look at where it is that people are really satisfied with the status quo because it works very well, and where there's just complacency and sort of interested parties who are already used to doing things and have responsibilities. That of course applies to all of you as well, and I think that--or to many of you, and I think that the question is how can you stop and say what are the principles? How can we define clear principles for what we are doing? And are the structures that we have and the processes that we have, consistent with those principles? And how can we sort out what we hear as the sort of analytical opinions of people and people with lots of experience, and the people that know a lot about this, who all have some interest in it. And so it's not that easy to sort out.

But basically, we need to be very responsible. The Federal government has a responsibility for its investment, but it absolutely should not over-regulate, is what I heard.

MS. McKIERNAN: Thank you. I'm Holly McKiernan, and as I am one of the synthesizers who has not spoken to you, I just thought I would at least clarify who I am, the organization I work with, and sort of the lens through which I'm listening to all of this information.

I work for Lumina Foundation for Education that is based in Indianapolis, Indiana. We're a private foundation that focuses on higher education access and success. Our goal is to increase degree attainment of high quality of degrees, and credentials to 60 percent by 2025. So that is the lens through which I come to this.

Also, just as a sort a context setting, private foundations have, I would say, a very unique role and a fortunate role. And that is, that we have a longer time horizon to focus on issues. We are not governed by election cycles or by shareholder returns. And so, in our economy, we are in a fortunate space, I would say, to be able to look at social challenges and really to catalyze the actors who can bring about the change. We are not the

responsible party for bringing about the change, but really to catalyze it.

Within this regard, a couple of people mentioned some of the work we are doing, so I wanted to at least acknowledge that work and how that connects to the discussions that have been going on here. There were several that mentioned the Degree Qualifications Profile, which is a document that we have been working with a number of higher education experts on, and it was released, and it is an attempt to reduce to writing and to begin a national discussion of what does a degree represent in terms of learning. And again it is a beta version to be tested and used by the field. And that was mentioned by several individuals in the comments. So, I just mentioned that because this is the lens through which I am listening to this information.

The real expert, I think is Peter, and so I do not want to reiterate or go over again necessarily what he has said, but to say "ditto" to kind of his comments, and to also acknowledge that -- to commend to you the two articles that Peter

mentioned. Because they really were good distillations I think of what happened yesterday.

The over-arching themes to me just listening to this were accountability and what does accountability really mean as far as completion and learning. And what is the accreditor role within that; improvement; and, third, transparency. And those being kind of the broad based themes into which a lot of individuals have spoken, and in my sense I was trying to imagine you sitting there and all the information that could just become white noise, if there was not some way of really being able to structure it.

So I started thinking, if I were you, how would I go about approaching this? But what I would begin with is to start to figure out -- as my colleague to the far right often asks me--is what is the problem or problems you are trying to solve? And to begin by really clarifying, what are the issues that we really need to focus on, and then how does all this information play into that? And one of the problems being just clearing out who does what

in the rolling and the mapping that Peter identified.

So, the first thing, I would, in just listening to this, is what are the problems? And, secondly, who are the actors that are best suited to be able to come up with solutions for those problems?

The loud message of "do no harm", but at the same time to identify some of the challenges that are facing the system right now, would be to identify who is in the best position to be able to come up with a solution that would get us off the status quo, to the extent we need to get off the status quo, and at the same time, provide the type of system that we really believe that our stakeholders deserve.

So in looking at that, what would be the challenges, I would say? The challenges would be, first of all, to acknowledge the pass/fail -- the difficulty of--a number of people referred to it as the "pass/fail". The challenge of the consistency in peer review, the challenge of the public and the policy makers really not understanding what accreditation is, and therefore what are the demands that are placed upon it. The tensions between the

accountability function, the transparency function, the variety of roles that are being asked to play, and the challenge of history: The history being the strengths of the system and the peer review, and the value that the Academy has placed on it, as well as the historical representations of geography being part of the place-basedness of regional accreditation.

So with that in mind, how do we go about doing this, and being able to speak with a shared voice? So where are the places that regional accreditation could really come together and provide a unified voice and an ability of being able to represent higher education and our system in a broad way. How can learning really be focused on in a shared voice? What are the processes that could be identified that would be consistent and would be of value? And what are the organizing principles that would then be helpful for being able to move this forward?

And finally, where do we need, and where is it that in fact federal involvement is most

helpful? And where is it truly not needed? And that coming from both those inside the system and those outside the system, and while it may seem overly Polly Anna'ish to think that those who are closest to the system could actually come up with solutions to some of the challenges that have been brought before you. I would guess that those closest to it, actually do have the most information and the ability to be able to address many of the issues that are being brought to you.

So, with that in mind, I think you have a very exciting challenge ahead of you, but one that provides us with an opportunity to be able to really acknowledge what the value is of our higher education system, the quality that we want to deliver on for our education, and what that means then to the stakeholders who really fund the system.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: Thank you.

I think that was very helpful. I appreciate all of what you have said, and I think that it does help break the issues down in ways that

we all heard yesterday, but I think in ways that are worth our digesting and thinking through.

We now have some time for members of the Committee to ask you about that before we got to the public comment and our own deliberations. Are there questions anybody has for our synthesizers?

Yes, Arthur.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROTHKOPF: Yes, there was just one item that was in the written comments that came in, and actually I thought was worth pursuing, and -- but it didn't come up in the conversation yesterday, but it was in two or three sets of comments. And that was the issue of the composition of the boards, if you will, of the accrediting bodies.

My understanding is that, by a rule --I don't think it's in the legislation--but I understand that one out of seven members are supposed to be public members --

AUDIENCE SPEAKER: (Inaudible, off microphone.)

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROTHKOPF: What is that?

It's in the law? Okay, well I thought it was not.

Okay, it's in the law.

I just wonder if we ought not to put that one on the table as well. Some people--I'm not expressing a view one way or the other, but it does seem to me that if these organizations are performing a public function, i.e., as gatekeepers to public money of great magnitude, whether or not that one in seven is sufficient. So I guess I would -- and since it did come in comments from various people, and I haven't read them all -- but at least three or four that I saw -- I guess I'd like to put that on the table.

MR. EWELL: Thanks, Art. One of them was me. And thank you for doing that. I think that in my experience with working with commissions, often times the most helpful members of those commissions in the deliberations, have been the public members. I can remember particularly, I don't know if Ralph Wolff was sitting by me or not, but in the WASC Senior Commission, a couple of the public members have been extremely helpful in cutting through.

I think that what we have seen that is different over the past two decades, as these things have come up, and then come up again, is the gradual appreciation that essentially higher education is too important to leave to the higher educators. It really -- the beneficiaries -- and we got this from The Business Perspective yesterday, that we do really do need to have other stakeholders at the table to let us know basically what we a -- what are the kinds of things that they are concerned about, and what we need to do. I would certainly very much support the idea of an increase in the number of public members.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: I would like to follow up, Peter, with a comment that you made. Well it was a theme yesterday and it's a general theme about whose role is it to decide what is to be done. We're charged with developing recommendations around the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, and within that is the role of NACIQI as it is defined. And I guess I would ask you, in terms of the pass/fail issue when it comes to approving agency applications, I think as you mentioned, there is a

similar debate, I think, about what the role of NACIQI ought to be in terms of its evaluation process and whether that can be helpful in this debate, rather than setting out in statute certain provisions. Is there way in which that re-approval process could be looked as a way of reinforcing whatever it is that, whatever standards, whatever expectations that we might have, or the department might have. So I guess I would just throw one out to you and ask if you had thought that one through.

MR. EWELL: Well I think that the -- I think what was being asked for is less a set of rulings, than opening up a dialogue. And I think what I heard in the comments from the accrediting community yesterday to you, was basically saying, "Could we have some early warning on some things? Could we dialogue about whether or not, since we got approved on this last time around, it's still okay?" I think that goes for the accreditors and the institutions, too. And I think that some of it is self-made.

One of the observations that I like to

make about the relationship between accreditors and institutions, is that it's a little like the relationship between students and faculty. Is it going to be on the test? How long does it have to be? You know, I mean, it's all these kinds of things which are procedural and not substantive. And I think that what the dialogue needs to do is to get beyond that stuff. And I think to meet much more frequently either through staff or individual focus groups, or whatever it may be, with your constituency to see basically what they think you need to hear.

I don't know if that's helpful, but that's what I heard.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: I guess the follow-on question is: Are you suggesting the same type of change in the dialogue between NACIQI and the accrediting agencies?

MR. EWELL: Yes, I was.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: Thank you.

COMMITTEE MEMBER McCLAY: I have just a very general statement to which I would like to hear your response. One of the things that comes across

very clearly in your comments and in many of the comments yesterday is that federal involvement is problematic and we don't want more of it. It's not going to help things.

I just wonder if that is a realistic position, given the fact American higher education floats in an ocean of student debt which now, in the Obama Administration, student loans are entirely a federal undertaking. Student aid is federal to a large degree. Is it realistic to think that all of that federal financial support can be had without the piper calling the tune?

Is it really realistic to say, "We don't want federal involvement", might it not, and I'm really presenting this as a thought experiment because I share your view on this. But if I'm right in thinking that the simple financial exigencies mean that there will be a greater degree of accountability to the Federal government, might it be more realistic to think about how to structure that, then to simply say that we don't want more of it?

MS. BAUM: I think that that concern is

what was largely behind many of the suggestions to separate out this eligibility for Federal financial aid. I mean, it's very clear that people are concerned that there are institutions that are doing such a poor job of serving anyone, that the Federal government should not be spending its money to subsidize students to attend them.

But to have that to be the focus of the accreditation process means so much less attention to the real core of what the process is trying to do, and the whole idea of institutional self-improvement and academic quality and learning is something that requires attention that is not going to be promoted by focusing on are they doing the minimum necessary to allow students to borrow money to go there.

MR. EWELL: Can I just follow up on that just quickly?

What I was not saying is: Don't do anything. The first thing that I was saying is: Be careful what you do. I mean, before you start acting, make sure that you understand the connections that are out there, and the incredible complexity of

the system.

I think one of the other themes that we've all reiterated is, give the functions -- allocate the functions to the people who can do them, the actors who can do them best. And I think that one of Kevin's important contributions yesterday was that there are some things that the Federal government can do by itself, without accreditation a whole lot better than it can delegate accreditation to do. And that's very much -- that's an idea that I would support.

COMMITTEE MEMBER McCLAY: Just to add something there. Part of what I'm wondering is whether this separation that you are talking about is really workable in the long run. That is, that you can have a sort of lowest common denominator level of accountability for simple brute fact of providing aid and then a higher level that would apply to accreditation as we traditionally understood it.

I just think of an example, that when I bought my first house, I bought it -- I didn't have money for a large down payment, so I bought an FHA

underwritten mortgage, which meant that my -- the house I bought had to conform to higher standards of inspection in general than they would have if I'd gotten a conventional loan.

And I can foresee very -- You can see where I'm going with this?

MR. EWELL: Yes.

COMMITTEE MEMBER McCLAY: Very rapidly, that the minimal standard would become the maximal standard, and would overtake the standard that is actually supposed to be the high one.

Can you comment on that? You obviously know where I'm getting at.

MS. BAUM: And I think that's a very reasonable question, and if you think about the discussion that's going on now about denying access to federal student aid funds for some institutions, that's not a conversation about taking their accreditation away, right?

So, and the question on my comments, I tried to say, it's one question to say, "where is the student allowed to spend their money", and it's

another question to say, "where is the Federal government choosing to spend its money?". So, I think that is an issue you have to address about, you know, minimum standards in the accreditation process and what -- certainly the idea is not to lower the standards from what it means to be an accredited institution. But maybe there are -- you know, you have to think about what are the appropriate standards for these two things? And maybe they are in fact two separate processes. But, that's a very good point.

MR. EWELL: I want to again re-emphasize the role that -- the potential role of data in this; that I think that it is quite possible to imagine, and we have imagined it several times in the past, a series of statistical indicators of essentially institutional good health that can run every year. And it's not just a periodic, once-every-ten-year kind of phenomenon. And when those things start to go south, then you ask some questions.

But basically, unless they do, things are pretty much as they should be. And I think that you

can imagine an eligibility system that would be based on that, rather than the kinds of things that Accreditation currently does.

COMMITTEE MEMBER KEISER: Just to follow up on that, I think Congressman Rob Andrews has been -- since 1997 -- offering the concept of a quality index, which would be exactly that, which would create seven, eight, nine metrics which an institution would be held accountable to. And, you know, there would be some kind of composite score that would create an eligibility bright line.

Do you think using that kind of factor within or without, outside of the accrediting process, would be an effective way and a measure of quality?

MR. EWELL: I think that it would be a decent way of setting the minimum standards. That's saying that within this range of variation, we expect the following. And some accrediting organizations are in fact doing that. You heard from a couple of the nationals yesterday that they have in fact graduation rate standards. That they're within a

standard deviation, or they're -- you know, whatever turns out to be, the metric, they'd have a conversation, which may lead to sanctions if an institution falls below that threshold.

What I would not do is add it all up and divide by N. I think that these are independent measures that need to be looked at independently, and some of them will be financial, some of them will be around student flow. I hope, and work towards the idea that at some point one of them will be about learning. Although, I don't think we're at the point where we can do that kind of metric with learning. But it's like the balance scorecard notion in business. Different indicators do different things. But I can easily conceive of a threshold standards mechanism that would look like that.

MS. BAUM: I think that thinking about it in terms of metrics helps also to think about the conceptual difference in these two functions. Because the idea of, you know, with Federal financial Aid, funds are pretty much have to be -- you're eligible, or you're not, although you can think of

some grey area. And if you thought of the accreditation process as, you know, do you just meet minimal standards, then we are wasting a lot of energy reaccrediting all these institutions that we absolutely know are going to be accredited, but we think it's a useful process for reasons other than finding out whether they cross the threshold. And we probably don't want that kind of elaborate subjective process for whether or not students can borrow money to go there. And so those metrics--I think that is a helpful way to think about it.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: Jamiene.

COMMITTEE MEMBER STUDLEY: Just building briefly on the data before I make my other point, there are lots of settings where we do these kinds of things. When we think of the effect of vehicle miles, which is a relatively new development, but drives people's choices, admittedly, not with the Federal Voucher, or the Federal resources, but how can we use information to help people make sensible choices? So we don't just have one, we have a highway and a city mileage because people know how

they expect to use the car. Refrigerators we are not quite as subtle about, but I think there are places where distributions and disaggregated data may be more important. And if our newspapers and television can, and our high schools and colleges, can teach people to understand more subtle data about lots of other things, maybe we can do that here, rather than just a yes/no switch.

Here's the comment that I started out to make. I'm intrigued that -- I would like to hear a little bit more about the comments from the session that we denominated outside the box. Because you picked up on them less, which is our tendency to stay with the mainline of our analysis about accreditation.

So, for example, the idea of "Breaking Out of the Time Box," and focusing on reaching competence, versus -- and separating ourselves from the notion of these programs come in units of four years or three years, was one from Mr. Dawson. The Lead Program idea had some things that might not go to the core approvals, but to what NACIQI could do,

and you've talked about the importance of people understanding what we do.

Evangelists, and partners in the process of accomplishing what we're accomplishing, is there anything to be mined from those as we go forward? And finally, Barmak talked about Incentives, Carrots and Sticks, and the phrase Joint and Several Liability, so that accreditors would experience consequences from their decisions. Balancing out the peer collegiality, friendliness, sense of being in it together, really put people in it together.

Is there anything that you suggest that we look at from those, or the concept which I think came from another session, of return on investment -- federal return on investment, as well as individual student ROI.

MR. EWELL: I'll start. There's a lot to chew on there. I mean certainly, the one that's nearest to what I believe in is the shift-toward competency. So, I think that is huge. And I think that the current credit hour mire that the Federal government has gotten itself into is not doing

anybody any good. That what we need to ask, particularly the accreditors to do -- and this is one of the things they are very good at -- is examination--or at least potentially good at--is examination of academic standards. I had a lot to do with putting together an institution called Western Governors University, which is entirely competency based, and students can take as long as they want to to meet the competencies that are established using whatever learning resources are out there.

I think that that is going to be really the future of the way most post-secondary education will be delivered 10 to 15 years from now. I think that shift is happening. And the sooner we get a regulatory structure that is around competencies -- which is why I think the degree profile and things like it, are so important -- I think the better off we'll be. So that would be my take on that.

I'm not going to touch Barmak. He's smarter than me. But the LEED thing is very intriguing and I think I talked to you that there are already a couple of things going on out there that

look like that. The New Learning Alliance, or New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability, is putting together one right now which will live on top of accreditation. Where, essentially, institutions can get a gold star, if you will, if they are engaging in exemplarily practice, with regards to doing all the things that we want them to do; with regards to collecting evidence of student academic achievement and using it to improve programs. CAEL, Council on Adult and Experiential Education, took exactly the LEED certification as a model, and is now running something they called the Adult Learning Focused Institutions Initiative where institutions can get a certification. Again, aside from accreditation for their use of good practices related to educating adults.

MS. MCKIERNAN: I would just echo Peter's comment about the competency based education and clarity on what are the outcomes that are really -- that we want from what a bachelors degree represents, what a masters degree represents, and that that creates a real opportunity for thinking about

education and the delivery of education in a really different way and that the accreditors are arguably uniquely situated to be able to address that and to think about that differently.

MS. BAUM: I'm going to touch Barmak. I think one of the important words, and I think you also used Jamienne, was "incentives". And I think that if you can think about how--where are there the wrong incentives in the system, and is there anything to do to to change those incentives That's very important and that's very different from specific rules and regulations.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: Go ahead Bill.

COMMITTEE MEMBER PEPICELLO: I have sort of a first-mover question. We've talked about, for want of a better term, sort of "cascading accountability", and allocating functions and the accountability that goes along with them. But have you given any thought to if these things cascade and if they are allocated, they must come from a source. And who is that first-actor, that first-mover, who would put all of this into motion?

MR. EWELL: That's a very good question.

I mean, I want to say it's the academic community acting essentially as a community. When I was engaged in these issues 15 years ago, in the 1992-94 period leading up the development of CHEA, there was clear leadership voice coming from ACE, as the spokesperson essentially of the academic community. Bob Atwell has done, and had done, a very good job of essentially coalescing all of that. I don't see it at the moment. I don't see that level of engagement in the presidential associations. I hope it could-- can happen. And we got some time to do that. But that's where it should be coming from.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: Anne.

COMMITTEE MEMBER NEAL: I want to thank you all for what I think is a very temperate, reasonable synthesis, and I guess that's probably the role of the synthesizers.

I guess I came away yesterday having listened to the testimony, with the potential exception of the accreditors panel, hearing really a litany of, I thought, fairly profound concerns about

the existing system. So, guess I feel a little less temperate after yesterday than I potentially hear you all.

I also wonder, as we look at where the dynamic has come, in terms of bringing about change, the Spellings Commission, for better or for worse, did prompt a lot of introspection on the part of the academic community. It seems to be in many respects the external actors have produced the response that the academic community has not itself produced for the 50 years, give or take a few, that it has had this particular process in place.

So I hear you that that's I think an important role for the academic community to undertake this self-study, if you will, but I guess given the history that we're addressing, I worry that that with a little more prodding--and maybe NACIQI can provide it--that a little more prodding is necessary because we haven't seen that come to the table in the past.

MR. EWELL: Well, I would respond by saying basically there is a difference between

"prodding" and "fixing." I mean, I think that it is an appropriate role to prod.

Frank Newman, the late great Frank Newman, always used to say basically, "nothing fundamental ever changed in higher education without an outside push." And I think he's right about that. In my writings about boards, and you know about the Little Yellow Book, and all that, but basically what I always say about the academic side of things, is the Board is not responsible for making academic policy, the faculty is responsible. But the Board is responsible for reminding the faculty that that's what they are supposed to be doing. And I think that's in many ways the role that you play. I think prodding is quite appropriate. I quite agree that the Spellings Commission -- people say that, "well, nothing happened." Well, a lot happened. I think that one of the interesting stories of the Spellings Commission is that many of the recommendations have, in fact, been followed. They've been followed because the community says, "maybe we ought to attend to this for a change", so we get the VSA; we get the

half a dozen other things that were essentially recommended--without the necessity of federal action.

And I think that that's basically the road that you need to follow, is to say, whatever you can do to scare them, if you will, into acting, I think is the road to go. Because basically I think that I do sense, particularly, not so much in the presidential associations, I think that they need to step up a little bit more than they have, but among presidents themselves.

I mean, when you go out into the community and you talk to people in the private sector -- a good friend of mine is Doug Bennett at Earlham, we went to school together, and you have institutions like that saying, "we're going to put our CLA scores out so that everyone can see them, and we are going to do our best to make sure that they get better." I think that's a new mood, and I think it's too important to waste.

MS. BAUM: Yes, I totally agree. And my "incentives" term, is your "prodding" term--I guess it's a gentler term. But I think, as I said at the

beginning of my comments, people are very dissatisfied with some of the outcomes -- right? But that doesn't -- But the question of what is the solution is another question. And the task is what should we say about reauthorization. So, if you ask a question in that context, people don't want Congress to start legislating lots of these details. And, so, that's a very different question from if you can generate more conversation and more thought about how the system needs to evolve to do a better job. I hear very few people saying it's perfect the way it is. We don't need to evolve, but there is a great fear that the proposed solution would be let's get Congress to make the details. And so I think you have to ask the question almost in a different context.

MS. McKIERNAN: And just to add. I would say that the role is to create a sense of urgency and ownership, and that sort of tends to bring about change. Because I agree with my colleagues that there was not a sense that everything is just fine. But more that, whose the right player to actually

drive it and what kind of incentives can actually bring about change and not waiting 20 years for change to happen because we don't have that amount of time.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROTHKOPF: To just follow up on the points we are making, I think we may be hearing today from a representative of Princeton, but Shirley Tilghman, President of Princeton, put in I thought a very thoughtful set of comments making some suggestions, among others, for proposing a sector-specific system and some other moves for change.

So, I think really maybe looking to university and college presidents for some guidance here might be helpful, if indeed Dupont Circle's going to be -- there's not the leadership within the associations. I think maybe individual presidents, such as President Tilghman, can provide us with some real guidance as we move forward.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: Any more questions or comments from members of the Committee?

(NO RESPONSE.)

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: Thank you very much, it was very helpful.