

**APPENDIX L – MEETING TRANSCRIPT OF THE PERSPECTIVES ON FEDERAL
AND STATE INTERESTS PANEL**

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROTHKOPF: I don't know-

-I will jump in. I guess there are a fair number of issues that I think are important that have been discussed.

I believe the issue of more and better data is extremely important as we go forward to enable us and our people who come after us to figure out, and to better inform the public about issues, whether it's student outcomes--and I understand all of the problems around that--but I don't think that these problems are insoluble. And so data is very important.

And I think we ought to be recommending that the Department and others be authorized to collect a lot of data, which they know are not able to collect, or haven't been able to collect, so that we can better inform people, I think.

I think the idea of, sort of--I'm concerned about the regionals. I think they actually

do really a wonderful job, but I think the question of whether you need, you know, the number you have and the geographic, I think we ought to be looking towards more of a sectoral analyses of the different sectors in some way. I don't know how to get from here to there, but I do think it's important.

I would like to hear more discussion about the gradations of accreditation. I think that's got some potential to better again inform the public and look at it from the consumer's standpoint. I think that is a very--I think the consumer is where at least I start my analysis. Part of that, of course, is transparency, which you have heard a lot about from a variety of people, including myself.

And then I would also like to hear some more, we kind of touched on it, this issue of whether there ought to be more, whether required or otherwise, more public participation in these commissions that are really serving a big public function here, and yet I just don't know enough about how -- and the right kind of public members. I mean, you can

get-- and I've seen this in public companies, you can get public members who are just "yes" men and women, but you want independent public people. And because of my own background, I think a business people would be very helpful as public members because at the end of the day, business is the ultimate consumer of most of what comes out of post-secondary education.

So, that's some issues that I think that are important.

COMMITTEE MEMBER KEISER: I assume, you know, we are speaking individually, kind of as representatives of our institutions and who nominated us, I think but not representing the government, per se. Because one of the tensions that we heard throughout this process, is accreditation was designed, as we found out from the New England Association of the 1885, but really was a collegial process, a process in which best practices, in which educational quality is addressed and not meeting the requirements of the government for them to give the

public comfort that the dollars and financial aid are spent wisely. And that tension that it creates has created a lot of the discussion that we have heard today.

And, I think, right on the top of our agenda should be: What is the role of accreditation as the gatekeeper? And, you know, on the one hand I think that the accrediting agencies are best served by keeping that role as gatekeeper, because it provides them a reason. There will be many institutions, especially in tight budgets, that if they were not required to be accredited would probably drop it. And, we have heard I have heard that, especially in the specialized side. But should accreditation be the gatekeeper, and if it is, what is a better role for it to be rather than be the policeman. Because that was also discussed, should it be a policeman, or should it be one of encouraging institutions to improve? And, those are two different roles that they don't know how to deal with.

I can speak from a personal example.

SACS, which I find an extremely rewarding organization for us to be part of and has approved our institution over the last 20 years, but most recently, we'll be moving a campus two miles from, you know just two miles-- not even from that much, in a straight line, that's if you drive it -- and we're having to put together a huge prospectus and go through an entire substantive change just for the movement of one from one facility to the other.

And, I think, in the past they wouldn't have done that, but now they are very concerned about meeting the requirements of the Federal government. That's a lot of work. I'm not saying that we're not willing do it, and we are and we will do it, but in a change of address, you know, that's kind of getting to the point of where -- I think you heard the President of Princeton talk about it.

And when I talked about cost, it's more than just the ten-year visit or the five-year visit, or as Roger Williams suggested, three-year visit. It

is the implementation of systems which may or may not be appropriate for the type of institution. So, that is--I think we really need to address that. I think that's what certainly the accrediting community wants us to do.

The issue of a "sector" is very interesting. The problem with that is what is a "sector"? And I'm not sure I know what the sectors are. Community Colleges in Florida are now four-year institutions. Do they fit a community college sector -- even though that is their title, and they are being recognized as such, but they have four-year programs? I have certificate programs through doctoral level programs. Am I a doctoral level institution? Or where the majority of my students are in the baccalaureate level? So, I don't know what a "sector" is. Is it all public universities fit together? And I'm not sure they would want to be by themselves, and all private independent institutions are proprietary? And again, I'm not sure those are what we are looking to do.

The concept of geography is interesting because -- and it was interesting to hear Belle's response -- that the reason we geographically have boundaries is because no one has asked us to change. And, the fact is that there are differences between regional agencies. You know, you heard it--Ralph talked about that today, between, you know, the AQUIP from North Central to the QEP in SACS, to the differences in Northwest, so why couldn't I be accredited by Northwest if their program is more effective to meet the needs of my students and my constituencies.

So that is an interesting thing. And how we deal with--you know, or the opposite side, should we be developing specific standards for all? And I think there are some, we heard, from today that would suggest that. I would not be happy with that, but that's okay.

So those are the things I think, in the bigger picture: Should the government rely on accreditation to be the gatekeeper? And the

gatekeeper function was also defined as the entry-level, but it's gone beyond the gatekeeper to now it is the policeman, and is that the right role for it?

COMMITTEE MEMBER PHILLIPS: Go ahead.

COMMITTEE MEMBER PEPICELLO: Yes, I would like to follow up on Art's comment.

First, I can one-up you. In the city in which we operate, a street had its name changed and we had to file all the paperwork as if we had moved that campus, despite the fact that only the address changed.

(Laughter.)

COMMITTEE MEMBER PEPICELLO: However, what I really want to follow up on is, I think that I'd like to see the discussion of the role of accreditation in a broader discussion of the triad, which again, kept coming up. Because I think that is central to a discussion of where does--if there is a policing function, where does it lie? If there is a quality assurance function, where does it lie? If there is a financial aspect, where does it lie? And

how do those things fall out? I think that is essential to a lot of this.

And I want to secondly, reemphasize our point on what is a "sector" because there are a number of ways we could, we might slice and dice the higher education community, and I think it's-- right now, obviously, people say, "well there's proprietaries and then there's the nonproprietaries. There's the doctoral degree granting, you know, and community colleges. And I think, we might do some brainstorming on some innovative ways to do that, that division, that would then have some impact on the regionals and how that might apply across the board there.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: I raised my hand, I swear I did.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: I think that I agree with what has been said. And I think that, you know, when we start with the triad, and I agree with your point Bill, part of what I'm curious about is, what's

the role -- there is some concern expressed about the role of Federal government, but what really is the right role of State government, as well? What is the role of the Federal government? What is the role of the accrediting communities? You still have to start at the very fundamental level of who is doing what, whose better at doing what, which level of review is appropriate for which issue? And, then I think take a better look at accreditation in that light.

For example, in my experience with accreditation, it does an exhaustive look at an institution. It may not be the right place for the policing function, but they are the ones who might first notice the crime. And so the question really is, with their review processes, they are a refined referral system for elements of further review at another level of, a more appropriate level of government, for example.

So I think looking at the roles of those three elements of the triad, is really a critical first step. I'm conscious of our role as the NACIQI

in making sure that we stay within the bounds and understand what it is that we are supposed to be doing. And not question around whether we should be recommending a statutory change, whether we should be recommending another look at some regulatory changes, whether-- that the role that we might play involves more engagement with the accrediting agencies than the review process that we engage in. I mean, the same criticism of the periodic review of a university might be applied to the periodic review of NACIQI, or of their department which is that you get a snapshot in time on a certain set of issues over once every so number of years, and there may be a different level of engagement, or there may be different tiers of review. I have questioned our ability to do the interim levels of evaluation as well. It appears also like a bit of a "yes/no" approval/disapproval process at the NACIQI level as well as at the accreditation level. So I think, I'm very interested in the tiered-level of reviews and the tiered-level of evaluation. Because, I think, having sat on a commission for ten years, I'm

very aware of the several varieties of probation and warning and special reports, and all the interim things that they do when they notice and issue, but I'm not sure there's not a way to refine that a little bit, and then create different markers for those universities, those institutions that are at a different level and those that require a little more focus, and a little more ongoing attention from an accrediting agency. I'm not sure that everyone has benefitted by a system where all are treated the same, when in fact, they are not all the same. And maybe the accrediting agencies ought to be freed up to devote more time to those institutions that are truly in need of more effort and more focus.

I think thinking about that, and thinking about what our role is in trying to help promote a system that allows some flexibility. In terms of the sectors, I think one -- I'm not sure yet that we want to, that we don't want to first try to create some consistency of process and consistency of standards across accrediting agencies. That was an

issue raised several times, that part of the lack of transparency is that there are a lot of different mechanisms and different standards in different regions or at different levels. I would be interested in exploring whether we can promote that, as opposed to necessarily changing the structure. Can we promote consistency and transparency of that consistency, so that the system works at a level and in a way that is more clear to people and more similar from one area to another area?

Those are some of the issues that I'm interested in having us explore further.

COMMITTEE MEMBER PHILLIPS: Anne?

COMMITTEE MEMBER NEAL: I second my colleagues on the desire to examine the triad, and particularly the gatekeeping role, and whether or not de-linking makes some sense in trying to determine what is really the best way to protect the student interest and the public interest and taxpayer dollars. So, I think there seems to be a fairly broad consensus on that one.

I also would like us to think about what, for a lack of a better term, I have put under the rubric of "choice and competition". The regional accrediting bodies, obviously now, I think we should examine whether or not it would be a good thing for institutions to have a choice and to be able to pick and choose amongst the national, and the so-called, regionals, so that they would be open for everyone. In the hopes that perhaps they might even develop some specialties in the course of having a competitive marketplace.

I also think that the question about new entrants, and receptivity to different paradigms, which this system doesn't currently address, I think that is something that does merit further consideration. Because I too worry that the existing standard before you get into the guild makes it very, very difficult. So I would like to examine: Are there ways to advance new entrants, both in the accrediting community, as well as, ones that would welcome more institutional variation?

In looking at the statute, I'm also wondering if we might not take a look at the various considerations that the accreditors are now charged with reviewing, and analyze whether or not they are all of equal value, and whether or not there might be some that we would take away, or some that we might add. For instance, I think many of you raised questions about are the accreditors the best to be looking at the finance? Or would that be better put into the Federal government's lap? Are the accreditors the best to be looking at governance? Or would that be better left to the trustees? I'm also wondering shouldn't we be looking at cost? Not only the cost to the institutions, but perhaps accreditors themselves could be looking at ways to save money, and ultimately benefit the student.

Two final things: The transparency, I think we all agree that greater transparency is important. And I think I am not at all clear what would be the information that we would like and who would be asking for that information, so would like

to explore that.

And, last but not least, potentially exploring some alternatives to the existing system which would allow expedited accreditation, if you will, for schools that already have been approved, have no black marks against their name and would like to avoid the ongoing process that we might explore some faster alternatives to what we have now.

COMMITTEE MEMBER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

Jamienne.

COMMITTEE MEMBER STUDLEY: I agree that all the issues that people have raised are issues that we ought to try to address. In a way there is confirmation once again that all the issues really worth talking about come down to matters of balance between something or something else, trying to find the balance between transparency and an effective confidential peer review process; or consistency versus adaptability to special circumstances. And we even have a triad, which makes the balance really complicated.

So I have five short points. I won't repeat the useful distinctions that we need to draw. I think everybody's talked in some version about having to figure out what the federal role and the accreditor role is. I never thought I'd say "triad" again after being at the department in the 90's, but there we are. What should the lengths of the legs of that stool be in order to try and get something flat on the top that works? And all these questions about the minimum standards or tiers program, and what are the right slices to take among different kinds of institutions or programs in order to get them the right kind of qualitative review?

Regulatory burden is something that was raised by a number of people and is always one of the cuts we should take at a point like this. Are there opportunities for greater coordination for reduction of duplication for, one way I put it was thinking about not having the belt and suspenders of inputs and outcomes. If you do one, do you need to do the other? Or will they get you to the same judgment

that you need to make so that you can moderate the burden on people?

I'm very intrigued by thinking about the notion of incentives and consequences that a number of people raised. I think Sandy Baum is the economist, brought that up first, but it's come back in number of conversations. So how do we assure responsibility for appropriate rigor? I think it's a way of cracking, if people think that there a guild, one way to alter those incentives is to change the responsibility people have to take for each other, and make it more so. There is a forum shopping issue that has come into the conversation and I feel strongly that people should be able to choose their peer group for voluntary activities, but you don't usually get to choose your gatekeeper or your police officer. And, so how do we think about that set of issues?

And I think the question about innovation is one that goes along with incentives and consequences. How can we, if we think there is a

dilemma related to innovation or change, how can we build a system to have either safeguards or alternatives or incentives for being prepared to look at things that are new or more difficult?

There is an element related to discretion and judgment throughout a lot of the more difficult issues or the tensions. If you think of comments that we had just this morning, when Dr. Fryshman talks about the shift to data, I can only imagine that part of that would be because people felt that walking through a classroom or reading the wonderful words of an institution, might not tell you, give people confidence that they knew what was going; or would be very hard to compare across institutions or to answer questions about how you were fair to a place, if you reached a negative result on such a basis. And so that drives you to data or things that have the appearance of fixedness.

Same thing about Princeton. As I said to someone in the hall, it would be hard if I were an accreditor -- I've done nowhere near as many visits

as Art Keiser, but if my group had said, we need to spend three days at this school and a short afternoon chat with the dean at this one, I think we would have been subject to at least question, maybe criticism, for making a judgment about what to do. And yet we have a feeling that there may be some places, at some times, for some reasons that we could look at differently, and where the burdens or the review might be different. And, we need to both set up criteria for those, but also, if we want to make room for informed discretion, we need to be clear about what that is so that the people who carry it out can defend what they did. Whether it's the staff of NACIQI, or any individual accreditor or any of the individual team, we know that those are risks that might take place if there was a simpler review or an expedited process, or any of those kinds of judgment calls.

And finally, the whole question of student choice among quality institutions is really at the base of this, and yet we don't talk much about

student choice "among." We are -- I tend to use analogies like, buying cars and refrigerators to help us understand what we're trying to do or take simple models with tangible things and try and apply them to the very complex, abstract job of understanding educational choices. But somewhere in the land of more subtle consumer information, not just more of it, but better ways to understand the many dimensions on which people choose institutions, and for the government to make a determination about its return on investment, about the system as a whole, I think are some of the umbrella questions, as we make more finite concrete legal recommendations.

COMMITTEE MEMBER KEISER: I have a question of Jamiene. What do you mean--because I've heard you say it three or four times, return on investment? Is Sandy Baum's daughter, who went to a liberal arts -- or it wasn't liberal arts, it was more of a graphic arts program, and she didn't go to work in that field, is that not a return on investment, or is that a return on investment?

COMMITTEE MEMBER STUDLEY: I think that is the kind of question that we should think about and how much of it was that -- Sandy used that for the point that it was a knowing choice by their family to invest in a liberal arts education. It was an art major at a liberal arts education institution, and she was making a point that it shouldn't be judged by whether she had an arts job or career over time. But I think that's a reasonable question for us to ask, and I don't think we have the time for the, the full conversation about how we would do that.

What we are limited by is the kinds of results, outcomes, what is the critical thinking, what's the capacity that she and her family decided was a very fine investment, for which she was getting and why she choose that over graphic arts. I suspect she could have earlier said that was the kind of education that she wanted, but I think I'll stick with Cam's desire to go around the room, I'm sure we'll have a chance to have that discussion among ourselves another time.

CHAIRMAN STAPLES: Any other comments or can we get to the next phase, which is --