

Discussion Outline: Accreditation and Regulation
Academic Affairs Committee
October 28, 2013

I. Overall Regulatory Context

A. The “Triad”

i. US Department of Education (USED)

- Title IV “Program Integrity” Regulations
 - Financial stability, proper management of taxpayer-supported funds
 - Title IV eligible institutions must be **both** authorized to operate in a state **and** accredited by an accreditor “recognized” by USED.

ii. States

- States confer authorization (in VA the terminology is “certification”) to operate as an institution of postsecondary education within the state.
- State laws vary considerably. Virginia’s include, among other things, specifications regarding faculty qualifications, refund policies, grievance procedures (for students), and credit transferability.
- Fulfill USED requirements that institutions have state authorization and that the state provides student protections oversight.

iii. Accreditors

- Member organizations that focus on programmatic quality, ongoing assessment and improvement.
- Fulfill USED requirement that institutions be accredited by a “recognized” accreditor that validates credit equivalency practices.

B. Title IV funds in Virginia

Federal Financial Aid—Virginia Institutions 2010-2011				
Total Pell (All Institutions)	Public	Private Exempt	POPE Degree Granting	POPE/Non-POPE Vocational
\$658,155,797	\$385,792,950	\$188,733,833	\$57,471,201	\$26,157,813
Total Loans (All Institutions)	Public	Private Exempt	POPE Degree Granting	POPE/Non-POPE Vocational
\$ 1,362,570,826	\$629,320,586	\$569,467,331	\$131,994,858	\$31,788,051

II. Virginia Regulation

A. New Degree-Granting Institutions

- Three years to “candidacy,” six years to accreditation
- Exemption-eligible after 10 years. **SCHEV is seeking to change this to 20 years.**

B. SCHEV and Accreditors

I. Similarities

- Some overlap among specific review criteria, including faculty qualifications, refund policies, curriculum, student files....

- Compliance with state/federal laws and regulations.

ii. Differences

- Certification by SCHEV is *necessary* to engage in postsecondary activities. Degree-granting institutions can operate without accreditation for periods of time. There is some choice as to which accreditor an institution pursues.
- Virginia regulation has greater specificity in certain areas (e.g., refund policies) than accreditors typically do.
- Accreditors typically delve into greater depth on program quality, assessment, and continuous improvement.
- SCHEV's on-campus reviews occur more frequently (approx. every three years as opposed to a typical ten years for accreditation site visits).
- Federal regulation imposes different specific burdens: states have a responsibility for student protections, accreditors for validating credit-equivalency.
- Accreditors are *member organizations*, SCHEV is an independent state agency.

iii. **Reliance** goes in both directions.