



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

SEP 24 2015

Dr. Susan D. Phillips, Chair
National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity
1990 K Street, N.W.
Suite 8073
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Dr. Phillips:

This letter follows up on the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity's (NACIQI) June 2015 meeting regarding both the vitally important discussion about student achievement and outcome measures and also a specific NACIQI recommendation in the context of the review of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

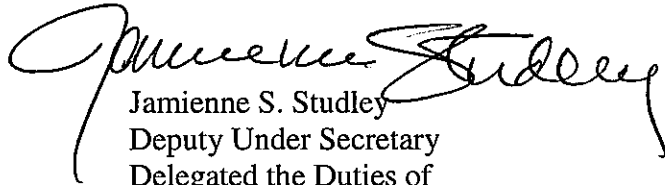
I applaud NACIQI's interest, reflected throughout the June 2015 meeting and beyond, in advancing a policy agenda to drive urgently-needed changes in the capacity of accreditation to promote accountability for successful outcomes for students. NACIQI's concerns about retention, persistence and completion rates, and student achievement and outcomes generally, are very much in line with the views expressed by Secretary Duncan in his major higher education speech on July 27, 2015, when he urged that government and accreditors focus less on enrollment and spending, and "more on outputs, like completion rates and degrees awarded, and whether those degrees have value in the marketplace." Under Secretary Ted Mitchell, in his remarks to NACIQI early in your meeting, also spoke to the significance of outcomes and the need for accreditation to be strengthened. As the Department works actively on a variety of ways to make the accreditation system both more rigorous and more flexible, we look forward to collaborating with NACIQI and others.

Today I renewed the recognition of HLC as a national recognized accrediting agency for two and one-half years. In addition to recommending its continued recognition, NACIQI recommended that I require that HLC "come before NACIQI to discuss retention, persistence and completion rates at the next NACIQI meeting." In the course of the NACIQI proceedings, however, it appeared that the specific nature, timing and format for your discussions would need to evolve to meet NACIQI's objectives. I will expect HLC to participate in NACIQI's discussions once they are arranged. In addition, I stand ready to work with NACIQI to assure the necessary participation from this and other accrediting agencies and entities, and otherwise to make those discussions effective.

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Let me take this opportunity to thank you and the other members of NACIQI for your thoughtful contributions and serious commitment to the cause of improving the quality and performance of postsecondary education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamiene S. Studley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jamiene S. Studley
Deputy Under Secretary
Delegated the Duties of
Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education