

According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), “Accreditation’ is the primary means of assuring and improving the quality of higher education institutions and programs in the United States.”<sup>1</sup> UCA’s institutional accreditor is the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The HLC evaluates and monitors its member institutions through comprehensive evaluations (typically every ten years), focused evaluations (as dictated by institutional change), and a variety of reports, ranging from annual data updates to issue-specific reports as required. UCA’s last comprehensive evaluation took place in April 2000. The next comprehensive evaluation visit is scheduled for March 8–10, 2010. Between now and the visit in 2010, UCA’s HLC2010 Self-Study Steering Committee will publish this monthly update for the campus.



### On Our Plates

The Steering Committee is drafting the self-study introduction and completing edits to the task force reports. The criteria and themes sections will require most of the remaining drafting time. Link to the self-study schedule <http://www.uca.edu/panda/hlc2010/#timeline> and outline <http://www.uca.edu/panda/hlc2010/ssoutline.html>.

### Focus on Types of Accreditation

Both programs and institutions may be accredited. CHEA notes that “In the U.S., colleges and universities are accredited by one of 19 recognized institutional accrediting organizations. Programs are accredited by one of approximately 60 recognized programmatic accrediting organizations.” In this context, “recognized” means that the accreditor “has been reviewed for quality” by the US Department of Education or by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation. (For this and related information, see the CHEA link, below, to Informing the Public about Accreditation.) A US college or university must be institutionally accredited to participate in Title IV (federal financial aid) programs.

Whereas institutional accreditation focuses on institutional mission, integrity, and capacity, program (or “special”) accreditation applies profession- or discipline-specific standards to an academic program or group of programs; achieving such accreditation is an indication that the accredited program is recognized by its professional peers for meeting such standards. Such recognition may be required as one of the requirements for licensure of a university’s graduates (e.g., teacher education programs in Arkansas must be accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education); in other cases, program accreditation may be a necessary distinction to attract students or place graduates.

UCA is institutionally accredited by the North Central Association’s Higher Learning Commission; a significant number of UCA’s academic programs have also achieved special accreditation. For more information, see the FAQs (and answers) in the HLC’s Overview of Accreditation at the link below. (On the topic of this month’s Focus On, see p. 12). For UCA’s accreditors, see <http://www.uca.edu/ubulletin/01/103.html>.

### Accreditation Resource Links

#### UCA – University of Central Arkansas

- :: HLC2010: <http://www.uca.edu/panda/hlc2010/>
- :: Accreditors: <http://www.uca.edu/ubulletin/01/103.html> (link to the *Undergraduate Bulletin*)
- :: Strategic Framework: [http://www.uca.edu/panda/sti/uca\\_strategic\\_framework.pdf](http://www.uca.edu/panda/sti/uca_strategic_framework.pdf) (see especially UCA’s Mission and Principles)

#### HLC – Higher Learning Commission

- :: Home: <http://www.ncahlc.org/>
- :: Overview of Accreditation: [http://www.ncahlc.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=83&Itemid=111](http://www.ncahlc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=83&Itemid=111)
- :: Directory of Affiliated Institutions: [http://www.ncahlc.org/index.php?option=com\\_directory&Itemid=192](http://www.ncahlc.org/index.php?option=com_directory&Itemid=192)

#### CHEA – Council for Higher Education Accreditation

- :: Home: <http://www.chea.org/>
- :: Informing the Public about Accreditation: [http://www.chea.org/public\\_info/](http://www.chea.org/public_info/)

<sup>1</sup> Council for Higher Education Accreditation, “Talking Points: Accreditation, Students and Society.” February 2009. Online at [http://chea.org/pdf/2009\\_Talking\\_Points.pdf](http://chea.org/pdf/2009_Talking_Points.pdf).