**Unit 3: Discussion**

**Professional Accreditation**

In addition to the environmental components that shape higher education curriculum, which you studied in Unit 1, accrediting associations and professional organizations exert significant influence on curriculum.

Colleges and universities become accredited so the product they provide (credits of curriculum) are recognized in society and by other colleges and universities. This is what separates an accredited institution from a “degree or diploma mill.” Professional education is unique because professional societies have a say in who joins the profession. They give their “blessing” to the institution for the degree programs. Therefore, higher education professionals need to work closely with the professional accreditation bodies, as well as the certification and licensing agencies.

The professional societies drive the standards and in turn influence the curriculum taught in professional schools.

Colleges and universities need to be cognizant of the standards and desires of credentialing and licensing bodies in order to maintain status and receive accreditation from the profession up and beyond the institution's accreditation. For these reasons, professional schools are often political in nature and are treated different from other schools in the university that do not have standards driven by the profession itself. Faculty and administrators must consider professional standards when making decisions about the viability of professional education curriculum. Professionals become the administrators of the professional programs. For example, judges and lawyers teach and administer law schools, medical doctors head up medical schools, and licensed nurses run the nursing schools. When you keep in mind that these professionals are usually not trained in higher education administration, you can then understand some of the problems or complexities that may occur in professional education programs.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is a forceful and persistent advocate for the value and credibility of accreditation to Congress and to the U.S. Department of Education. CHEA informs and educates students, the general public and the press on an ongoing basis about the contribution of accreditation.  The CHEA database lists more than 8,200 degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions and more than 20,400 programs that are accredited by United States accrediting organizations that have been recognized either by CHEA or by the United States Department of Education (USDE) or both, and provides links to four primary types of accrediting organizations:

CHEA- and USDE-Recognized Accrediting Organizations. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.chea.org/userfiles/recognition/chea_usde_allaccred.pdf>