

The Trust Divide: What the U.S. Accreditation Crisis Warns Us About Quality Assurance

Keri Nunn-Ellison EdD, MSN/Ed, RN, CNE

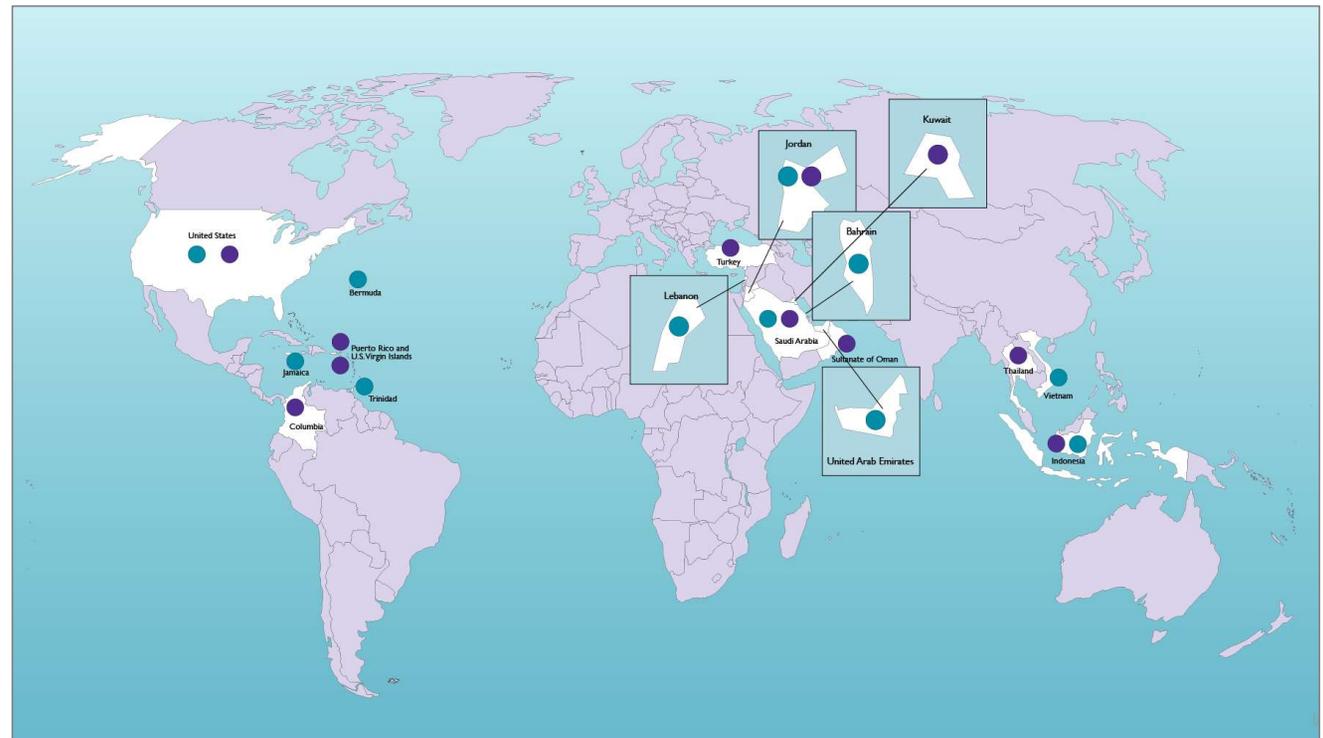
Melissa Tillson PhD, RN, CNE

Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN)

ACEN's Global Presence

- USDE and CHEA Recognized
- Programmatic Accreditation for over 1600 Accredited and Candidate Nursing Education Programs

INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITED AND CANDIDATE PROGRAMS



Why Trust Matters

- Trust is foundational to quality assurance (QA).
- Without trust, QA systems lose credibility and influence.
- Trust must be earned, not assumed.

Opening Poll

- Which stakeholder group has the least trust in accreditation/quality assurance agencies in your context?
 - Students
 - Employers
 - Institutions
 - Governments
 - Public

The U.S. Crisis Unfolds

- Academic Scandals and Fraudulent Credentials - Where were the accreditors?
- Public and political backlash against higher education
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion under ideological attack
- Defunding/dismantling of U.S. Department of Education

Corinthian to Sell 95 of Its Campuses Under Education Dept. Agreement

JULY 4, 2014



Los Angeles – Corinthian Colleges, one of the largest *for-profit* education companies in the United States, has agreed to sell 95 of its campuses in a deal brokered by the U.S. Department of Education.

The agreement will affect tens of thousands of students, allowing the troubled company to avoid immediate closure as it faces multiple government investigations.

See Page 10 - Frank Sign

The merger and any educational

moment people and a track that international
series of children's dairy in clusters.

UNC report finds 18 years of academic fraud to keep athletes playing

OCTOBER 23, 2014



Chapel Hill, N.C. — The University of North Carolina has uncovered 18 years of widespread academic fraud designed to keep athletes eligible to play sports, according to an investigation released Wednesday.

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ITT Educational Services Closes Campuses: Closed School Loan Discharge Relief Extended to More Former ITT Students

2016



ITT Technical Institute has announced it is permanently closing its campuses, affecting tens of thousands of students. As a result, the federal government has expanded closed school loan discharge relief program eligibility to an estimated 115,000 former ITT students impacted by the shutdown.

College Admissions Scandal

OCTOBER 8, 2021



Dozens of wealthy parents, athletic coaches, and college administrators have been charged in a sweeping college admissions bribery scandal, exposing a corrupt scheme to get students into elite universities.

A National education commission

investigation is still under way.

In Probation for For-Profit College Chain

SEPTEMBER 10, 2018



San Francisco — The Education Department has placed a large for-profit college chain on probation, raising concerns about its future.

Investigations began to uncover the school's potential problems in the following areas: the strength of its mission, faculty hiring practices, the quality of its instruction, and the school's financial health. The school has been placed on probation for failing to meet these standards. The school is required to submit a plan to address these issues within a set period of time. Failure to do so could result in the school being closed.

In UNC Case, No Watchdog for Major Academic Fraud

OCTOBER 13, 2017

Chapel Hill, N.C. — The University of North Carolina failed to effectively address years of major academic fraud that disproportionately benefited its athletes, according to reports released Friday.

Investigators say the university failed to address the problem of academic fraud for years. The university's failure to address the problem of academic fraud is a major concern. The university's failure to address the problem of academic fraud is a major concern. The university's failure to address the problem of academic fraud is a major concern.

The Watchdogs of College Education Rarely Bite

Accreditors keep hundreds of schools with low graduation rates or high loan defaults alive

JUNE 17, 2015



Despite promises that accreditors would act as watchdogs for college education, hundreds of schools with poor graduation rates or high loan defaults are still alive.

Despite promises that accreditors would act as watchdogs for college education, hundreds of schools with poor graduation rates or high loan defaults are still alive. The accreditors' failure to act as watchdogs is a major concern. The accreditors' failure to act as watchdogs is a major concern. The accreditors' failure to act as watchdogs is a major concern.

2023

Operation Nightingale

- More than 7,600 fake nursing diplomas/transcripts
- [Fraudulent Nursing Diploma Scheme Leads to Federal Charges Against 25 Defendants](#)

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PRESS RELEASE

Fraudulent Nursing Diploma Scheme Leads to Federal Charges Against 25 Defendants

Wednesday, January 25, 2023

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For Immediate Release
U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Florida

2025

- 'Fake nurse' arrested in Florida after seeing more than 4,000 patients
- Man arrested after allegedly working as a nurse without a license

BBC

'Fake nurse' arrested in Florida after seeing more than 4,000 patients

7 August 2025

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Victoria Bourne
BBC News



Watch: Moment 'fake nurse' who saw more than 4000 patients is arrested while working

Man arrested after allegedly working as a nurse without a license



A man was arrested after allegedly working as a nurse without a license. (Source: Volusia Sheriff's Office)

By Amanda Alvarado
Published: Sep 10, 2025 at 9:07 AM EDT

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VOLUSIA COUNTY, Fla. (Gray News) - A 55-year-old man was arrested after allegedly working as a nurse without a license.

INSIDE A NETWORK OF **Fake College** Websites



Fake Accrediting Agencies

<https://www.smich.university/accreditations/>

Acknowledged By World-Class Accreditation Bodies

At Southeastern Michigan University, our core values are quality, innovation, care, and support for students worldwide. We are dedicated to delivering education and experiences. Our unique approach to education is highlighted through our pursuit of further certifications and accreditations from prestigious bodies, ensuring the highest standards of excellence.



ABOBC Accreditation

ABOBC operates as a global quality assurance agency, dedicated to enhancing standards across various organizations worldwide. Through its extensive network of professionals, ABOBC assesses educational institutions, corporations, professionals, and single individuals, striving to ensure quality assurance benchmarks are met.

[View Certificate](#) [View Website](#)



The Gulf Higher Education Accreditation Bureau Accreditation

The Gulf Higher Education Accreditation Bureau (GHEAB) is an independent quality assurance organization committed to ensuring high-quality standards in higher education. These bodies operate in diverse ways and encourage participation in associate members to uphold educational excellence.

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The United States Ministry Of Accredited Engineering Education Certification Accreditation

The United States Ministry of Accredited Engineering Education Certification is determined to ensure that students receive the best quality education. The United States Ministry of Accredited Engineering Education Certification has global partners that facilitate the academic process.

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CAHEUS Accreditation

CAHEUS is a distinguished national accreditation authority that grants approval for developing programs spanning law, nursing, engineering, business management, criminal law, social services, applied arts, sciences, and other disciplines. The accreditation is on an individual basis.

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The International Ministry Of Educational Accreditation (IMOEA) Accreditation

The International Ministry of Educational Accreditation (IMOEA) is a respected accrediting agency committed to advancing quality standards and fostering excellence in higher education institutions throughout the world.

[View Certificate](#) [View Website](#)



Even a Deceiving US Dept. of Education Website

- <https://www.doeusa.org/>



CHEA Responds

- <https://www.chea.org/chea-statement-response-fake-accreditor-and-higher-education-institution-websites>

August 14, 2025

**CHEA Statement in Response to Fake Accreditor
And Higher Education Institutional Websites**

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is deeply concerned about the rise of fraudulent institutional and accreditation websites that mislead students and undermine the public's trust in legitimate institutions, accreditation, and quality assurance. These fraudulent sites mimic legitimate accrediting organizations and institutions, charging fees and stealing personal data, with devastating consequences to prospective students. CHEA condemns these practices. It is vital that all prospective students and individuals who use accreditation as a measure of quality, ensure that the accreditor is recognized by CHEA and/or the U.S. Department of Education. This is the only way to guarantee that the listed accreditor is not an accreditation mill, and it will protect students and preserve the quality and integrity of accreditation.

"Accreditation is meant to assure quality and integrity in higher education—not to be misused as a tool for fraud," said Nasser H. Paydar, President of CHEA. "These fake accreditors prey on the trust of students and the public, and we are committed to exposing and stopping them."

CHEA has a long-standing practice of seeking legislative protection for the public against degree mills and accreditation mills.

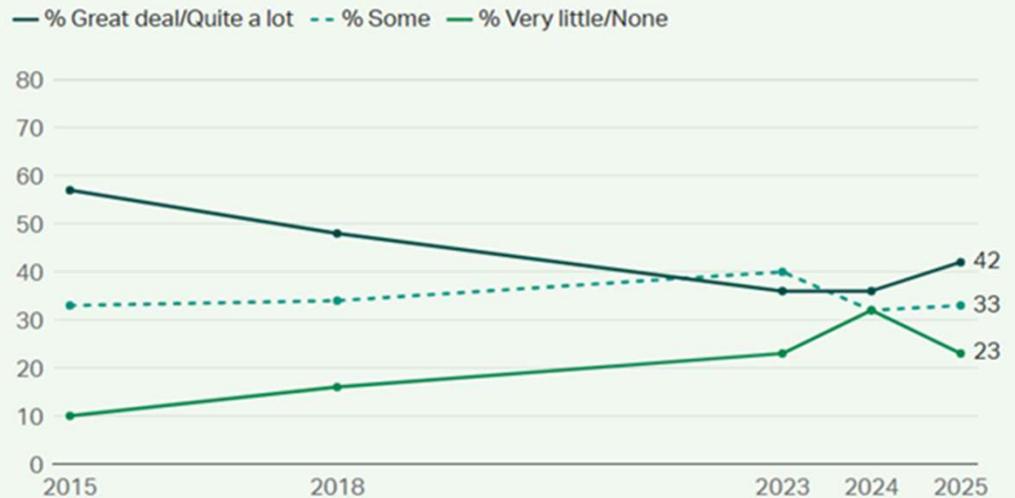
Nasser H. Paydar, Ph.D.
President
Council for Higher Education Accreditation

The Trust Divide

- Stakeholder confidence is fractured.
- Gallup Poll shows concerns with:
 - Political agendas
 - Poor outcomes
 - Rising costs/student debt
 - Value of a college education
- Different expectations from students, institutions, government, and public.
- Accreditors struggle to bridge the gap.

Confidence in U.S. Higher Education

Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in higher education — a great deal, quite a lot, some or very little?



"None" is a volunteered response. No opinion percentages are not shown.

[Get the data](#) • [Download image](#)

GALLUP

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ADMINISTRATION

Accreditors Now Find Themselves Under Critical Review



By *Eric Kelderman*

December 2, 2013

GOVERNMENT

U.S. to Put New Requirements on Accreditors

The administration is taking only limited steps. Bigger changes will require cooperation from Congress.



By *Eric Kelderman*

November 6, 2015

State Interventions

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ACCREDITATION ANTICS

'A Mandate for Musical Chairs': Florida Bill Would Require Colleges to Change Accreditors

 By Eric Kelderman

February 4, 2022

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DIVE BRIEF

North Carolina law forces colleges to change accreditors every cycle

Public colleges in the state will now have to find a new accrediting agency around every five to 10 years, similar to how Florida institutions must operate.

Published Oct. 10, 2023

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Events and Insights: Growing Cyber Threat Making Wise Tech Investments Strategic-Leadership Program

6 State University Systems Are Partnering to Create a New Accreditor. Most Details Are TBD.

 By Eric Kelderman

June 26, 2025

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Termination of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools as an ED Recognized Accrediting Agency

On August 19, 2022, the Deputy Secretary of Education, as delegated by the Secretary, issued a decision regarding the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) regarding its status as a recognized accrediting agency. Deputy Secretary Marten has upheld the decision by the Senior Department Official regarding its status as a recognized accrediting agency.

NBC NEWS Education Department takes a major step forward in the Trump administration's plans to dismantle it

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TRUMP
ADMINISTRATION

Education Department takes a major step forward in the Trump administration's plans to dismantle it

Six agreements the Education Department signed will effectively move some grant programs to other agencies.

Federal Oversight

Federal Interventions

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Events and Insights: Growing Cyber Threat Making Wise Tech Investments Strategic-Leadership Program

ACCREDITATION

Trump's Executive Order Bashes Accreditors, Blames DEI for Low Standards and Poor Outcomes

 By Eric Kelderman

April 23, 2025

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Stateline

HEALTH CARE DEMOCRACY EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT SOCIETY CRIMINAL JUSTICE

EDUCATION FEDERAL IMPACT

Accreditation of colleges, once low key, has gotten political

With Trump wielding a 'secret weapon,' Southern states come together to create a new model.

BY: ROBBIE SEQUEIRA - NOVEMBER 13, 2025 5:00 AM





How Can We Rebuild Trust?

How do we Rebuild Trust?

- Consider trust breakdown in your own country/context
 - Governments
 - Institutions
 - Students
 - Employers
 - Public
- What actions have you taken or could we take to build trust in QA for your assigned role/group?

Global Exchange

- What trust-building strategies work in your region?
- How is your QA system responding to pressure?
- What would you borrow - or avoid - from the U.S. example?

Final Reflection

- How can QA bodies show they are more than box-checkers?
- What one idea will you take back to your QA context?
- What can you do differently tomorrow to maintain or build trust?

Thank You

- Contact:
- kunn-Elison@acenursing.org
- mtillson@acenursing.org