



Update to Members, Applicants, and Friends of AALE Fall, 2008

The U.S. Secretary of Education recently announced that she has granted the American Academy for Liberal Education full re-recognition as a national accrediting agency.

The response to this news has been quite positive. In fact, during the past couple of months we have received more applications and scheduled more site visits, than we have in any similar period in the past. Not surprisingly, this has created an unusually heavy workload. The Academy remains a small organization, and we hope that members and applicants can appreciate the need for patience while our higher education accreditation staff continues to work through this backlog. Of course, we can hardly complain of too many applicants, even with temporarily reduced resources to deal with them. The good news is that we have made considerable progress and hope to be back to normal shortly.

Additionally, we are preparing a written report for submission to the Department of Education on assessing student learning. This is due next month. Originally, the report was expected to be reviewed by the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) at its December, 2008 meeting. However, since the report was requested, Congress has abolished the NACIQI, primarily on the ground that it had been exercising authority that Congress had not granted to it – especially in the matter of imposing student learning requirements for all of America's colleges and universities. A new committee is to be formed, but there has as yet been no indication of when this will take place. Since the NACIQI no longer exists, and since, by law, the Secretary may not issue rulings without its recommendations, no one is sure what will be done with reports due in December. Nevertheless, we are proceeding on the assumption that our report will need to be submitted prior to the date when the now non-existent committee was to have met.

While these immediate concerns now require our full attention, it is not too early to begin planning for the future. Before the difficulties with the Department arose, the board of trustees had decided to make a number of significant changes in the way the board carries out its duties. These changes were not expected to affect the day to day operations of AALE, but they would have led to recruiting some new board members with backgrounds in business as well as in education. All this was put on hold while we dealt with the more urgent matter of repairing our relations with the USDOED. With the renewal of our charter, this urgency has certainly

diminished; still, the time and resources necessary to implement the board's plan are not yet available, and may not be available for several months yet.

We will soon be speaking with members about updating the information we have from them on student assessment. Regardless of the use the report will eventually be put to, we want to ensure that it is as up to date as possible.

Jeffrey D. Wallin
President