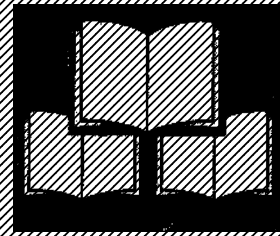


AALE

NEWSLETTER



AALE, CHEA Host Wye River Conference

The Academy recently joined forces with the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to sponsor an informal ‘accreditors retreat’ on the need to link the accreditation of web-based distance learning programs to substantive assessment of student learning, with a special focus on general education. The retreat, held this past October 24 and 25 at the Wye River Conference Center on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, brought together representatives of regional accrediting agencies and other influential members of the higher education community.

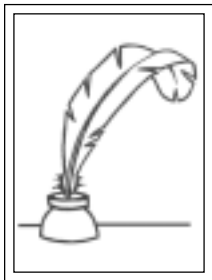
All participants agreed that the pressing need to develop specialized accreditation procedures for distance learning programs provides a major opportunity to develop and incorporate student achievement measures into the evaluation of web-based general education programs. If effective



Donald Crump (left) of SACS speaking with John Harris, associate provost at Samford University

[Wye continued on page 2]

From the President’s Desk: K - 12 Initiatives



The past year has been a very good one for the Academy. Membership and applications rose steadily, a major new research project in distance learning was launched, accreditation standards and criteria have been strengthened and revised, and numerous outreach conferences and appearances have substantially increased the Academy’s role and visibility in the higher education accreditation community. The Academy stands poised to accelerate activity on several key fronts in the coming year, with joint accreditation projects already in development with several

regional agencies, and with pilot learning assessment reviews underway at eight distinguished liberal arts colleges and universities.

K through 16 – the last frontier

With these developments we see the fruits of our persistent efforts to graft high academic and curricular standards onto the process of college and university accreditation. But as in all good endeavors, the more one progresses the more one becomes aware of the real scope of the task. In the course of our work I have become increasingly aware of the profound impact that the quality of teaching and learning at the secondary school level has on the caliber of the education that can be delivered by post-secondary institutions. It came as no surprise to me

when a recent Department of Education study found that the best indicator of college success “is a high-school curriculum of high intensity and quality.” For this reason the Academy is energetically exploring, as a natural extension of its original mission, projects that will help bring the same high standards it applies to baccalaureate education to K through 12 schools and – perhaps most critically – to the education of our secondary and primary school teachers. The Academy is now working with distinguished experts and professionals in these fields to determine the most effective avenues for action. Look to this summer’s newsletter – and to the Academy’s website – for developments.

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**You can now view and download all Academy publications
from the "Publications" page on our website.**

Currently Available:

- Two Approaches to Liberal Education: An AALE Scholars Debate
 - The Jacques Barzun Award Lecture by Jaroslav Pelikan
- Some Questions and Answers About Liberal Arts Accreditation
 - PEW: A New Model for Accreditation in the Liberal Arts
 - FIPSE project abstract: Trends in the Liberal Arts Core
 - Complete Accreditation Materials
 - Current and Past Newsletters

[Wye continued from page 1]

procedures can be designed and successfully implemented for web-based degree programs, they can then be 'retro-fitted' for use in the accreditation of traditional, site-based education. The fruitful discussions at the Wye River Conference were part of an ongoing series of meetings and conferences envisioned by the Academy to bring greater attention to the use of effective learning assessment in liberal arts accreditation.

In attendance were Judith Eaton, president of CHEA, Steve Crow, executive director of the NCA, Barbara Brittingham, deputy director of NEASC Commission on Higher Education, Donald Crump, associate executive director of SACS, Roger Benjamin, president of the Council for Aid to Education, Mary Beth Susman,

president of Kentucky Virtual University, Milton Greenberg, professor emeritus of American University, Fred Harclerod, founding president of California State University - Hayward, Judith Watkins, vice president for accreditation services at CHEA, John Harris, associate provost for quality and assessment at Samford University, Frank Mayadas, program director at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Beverly Popelka, chief of the academic programs division at the Department of Defense, Ellen Wert, program officer for education at The Pew Charitable Trusts, and AALE staff.

AALE NEWSLETTER

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Editor, Francis DuVinage
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Robin Rietz

The American Academy for Liberal Education is recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education as a national agency for the accreditation and pre-accreditation of institutions and programs within institutions of higher education that offer liberal arts degrees at the baccalaureate level. The Academy is a non-profit, non-sectarian and non-partisan organization incorporated in the District of Columbia.

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Evidence of Liberal Learning Now Central Feature of AALE Accreditation

In a significant development for liberal arts accreditation, the Academy's Board of Trustees has approved the nation's first accreditation standards to address substantive issues of liberal learning. Adoption of these new standards marks the first time substantive evidence of learning in the liberal arts has formed a central part of the accreditation standards of a U.S. Department of Education recognized agency.

The newly revised *Standards and Criteria for Accreditation* retain the Academy's signature Education Standards and enhances them in two ways:

- first, through a thorough reorganization that effectively reflects the Academy's central focus on issues of educational substance; and
- second, by the addition of clear, practicable, and liberal-arts appropriate learning assessment standards.

The new Education Standards for "Liberal Learning Assessment" are the most important product of the Academy's on-going research and implementation project in learning assessment for the liberal arts, generously sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The preface to the Academy's new *Standards and Criteria for Accreditation* is reproduced below. Print copies are available by request, and the full text is also available for downloading (PDF format) as well as for on-line

viewing at the Academy's website (www.aale.org).

Preface to the Academy's New Standards and Criteria for Accreditation



“Forming liberally educated men and women has always been the leading aim of undergraduate liberal arts institutions and programs. For this reason the American Academy for Liberal Education believes that an institution's demonstrated ability to instill and develop in its students the characteristics of liberally educate persons is the soundest basis for liberal arts accreditation. The Academy's Education Standards implement this principle in two distinct and complementary ways.

“They begin by ensuring that the cornerstones of an institution's educational enterprise focus clearly and coherently on providing students with a comprehensive liberal education. Sections A through C of the Education Standards ask institutions to describe their mission and educational aims, their conception and implementation of programs of study designed to fulfill those aims, their formation of a faculty well-qualified to carry out those programs of study, and their development of learning resources to support those programs. These traditional elements of an educational enterprise are the

foundation and framework for student achievement in liberal learning.

“For this reason the Education Standards culminate in the Academy's unique Liberal Learning Assessment standards. In Section D the Academy asks institutions to reflect upon and to describe and document their success in instilling and developing in their students the characteristics of liberally educated persons. These characteristics include an ability to reason clearly and effectively about important questions and issues, the acquisition of a rich fund of meaningful knowledge, and an inclination for seeking out and acquiring knowledge and skills. The Academy's Liberal Learning Assessment standards are intended to open or extend a campus-wide dialogue on aims for student learning as well as on means for determining whether those aims are being met. These standards are carefully designed to be appropriate to the goals, means, and nature of liberal education and can accommodate the widest variety of curricular models and approaches.”

Advisory Board Convenes on Distance Education

On November 16, 2001, AALE held the initial meeting of its distance education national advisory board, a body charged with providing guidance and oversight of the Academy's newest initiative — "Accrediting for Educational Effectiveness in Distance Learning Degree Programs." "Accrediting," which is sponsored in large part by The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) through its competitive Learning Anytime, Anywhere Partnership (LAAP) program, is a project initiated by the Academy to bring together the accrediting community, the assessment community, and distance learning providers in an effort to develop achievement-based standards that can be used to accredit effectively online general education programs.

The Academy's initiative, which is a response to the relatively sudden explosion of online courses and programs in the absence of any measure of quality assurance, is an attempt to adapt its recent innovations in accreditation reform to the electronic, online delivery platform. Much of the first meeting was spent establishing the parameters of the group and its responsibilities. The group then proceeded to consider fundamental concepts such as the definition of an online "class" and whether a student who fulfills general education requirements among several

[Distance Ed continued on page 8]

Michael Poliakoff Addresses National Collegiate Honors Council

AALE Executive Director Michael Poliakoff spoke at the 35th Annual Conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), an organization of colleges and universities supporting honors education, on October 20, 2000 about using student learning outcomes assessment in liberal arts college accreditation.

Raising the questions "What do we mean when we say *quality* in higher education?" and "How do we measure that quality?," Dr. Poliakoff used recent surveys of college students to portray the weaknesses in liberal arts preparation often seen in American higher education. His response to the first question centered on schools providing the skills necessary for its graduates to be effective members of society. Dr. Poliakoff pointed out that the skills most frequently sought by companies in hiring practices, especially in the new economy where it is expected a person will change careers many times, are precisely those developed by a quality liberal education - critical thinking, creativity, English language skills both spoken and written, mathematical and scientific skills, and the ability to apply knowledge. He pointed out how AALE's *Education Standards* are specifically designed to address a school's dedication to and success with instilling these skills and contrasted the standards with those of our regional

accreditors whose broad missions preclude addressing such specific content issues.

In answer to the second question, Dr. Poliakoff noted the difference between measuring basic college skills, which can be accomplished with standardized instruments, and assessing liberal arts effectiveness, which requires more sophisticated methods. Dr. Poliakoff praised the efforts of several schools for their own pursuits of effective assessment procedures, including South Dakota's public universities for the courage they have shown in using objective tests of college skills. Dr. Poliakoff articulated the guiding principle that a fully effective assessment must make the intellectual virtues which are central to liberal arts the focus of assessment. Signs of a successful program are a clear sense of what it means to be a student and graduate of the institution, a reflective intellectual community, and the absence of academic turf wars.

Dr. Poliakoff described AALE's recent efforts in the use of student learning outcomes assessment and drew on AALE's experience at Tusculum College, the test subject for the Academy's new *Educational Effectiveness Protocols*, to illustrate one way of overcoming the barriers to strong educational self-assessment. These new protocols were developed recently with generous support from The Pew

[NCHC continued on page 8]

ACCREDITATION UPDATE

**Ave Maria College
of the Americas**
San Marcos, Nicaragua
(A campus of **Ave Maria
College**, Ypsilanti, MI)



Extension of Preaccreditation Status

Ave Maria College of the Americas (AMCA) is a Catholic institution of higher learning, organized for the dual purposes of promoting teaching, research, and learning in the abiding tradition of Catholic thought and of furthering Christian witness in the spirit of Vatican II and the recent encyclical *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Accordingly, the College mission statement affirms its "sponsorship of a liberal arts curriculum dedicated. . . to the advancement of human culture, the promotion of dialogue between faith and reason, and the formation of men and women in the intellectual and moral virtues of the Catholic faith."

Founded in 1992 as the Latin American Campus of the University of Mobile, an Alabama Baptist institution, the college was acquired on July 1, 2000 by Ave Maria College of Ypsilanti, Michigan. Though transformed with a new religious identity as well as new governance, administration, and financial resources, AMCA still seeks to fulfill the original purpose of the Latin American

Campus: to provide an English-language, U.S. style, U. S. accredited college education for Nicaraguan students and students from other Central American countries and to serve as an instrument for evangelization in the Central American region.

Reflecting the college motto "*Veritatis Splendor*," AMCA's curriculum is designed to introduce students to the fundamental importance of truth in human life, and thereby to form them as persons, prepare them for the tasks of citizenship, and challenge them to assume leadership roles in their chosen professions. AMCA's demanding general education requirements reflect conviction that "all students, regardless of eventual career or major, will benefit from a thorough consideration of the central texts, authors, and ideas of the liberal arts tradition."

Requirements include coursework in humanities, theology, philosophy, science, mathematics, rhetoric, and fine arts. Fully cognizant of its unique international character and educational purposes, AMCA is committed to producing graduates with excellent writing and speaking skills in both English and Spanish and requires coursework in literature, composition, and communication in both languages.

ACCREDITATION REVIEW

The following applications are scheduled for review by the Board of Trustees on November 3, 2001:

For Preaccreditation:

New St. Andrews College,
Moscow, Idaho

Patrick Henry College,
Purcellville, Virginia

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Academy invites public comment on applications under review. Comments must be made in writing and in regard to the Academy's *Standards and Criteria*. Comments should be sent to the following address at least thirty (30) days before the date of review:

1700 K St, NW
Suite 901
Washington, DC 20006
telephone: 202.452.8611
fax: 202.452.8620

*Current information on all
final accreditation actions
and upcoming reviews is
available on the
"Accreditation" page of
the Academy's website,*

www.aale.org

AALE Presents Innovative Viability Measures at WASC Data Elements Conference

The Academy presented its innovative **Key Performance Indicators** (KPI) data reporting instrument at a June meeting of the Data Elements Task Force of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), in Oakland, CA. Representing the Academy at this meeting were Tom Suh, research and policy analyst, and Dale Larson, director of finance at the University of Dallas and a consultant to the Academy on issues of higher education finance. Their presentation is the latest in a series of meetings in which the Academy has shared the fruits of its KPI project with regional accreditors.

WASC is one of six regional accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to determine Title IV eligibility for colleges and universities. It primarily serves institutions in the states of California and Hawaii.

Several of these agencies, including WASC, are currently revising their accreditation standards and procedures, including their data reporting systems and requirements. Suh and Larson, appearing at WASC's request, explained that the Academy's purpose in conceiving and developing the KPI process, a streamlined system for financial and institutional data collection and analysis, has been to minimize time and manpower required to establish the viability of an institutions educational programs. Less time spent on these financial and

institutional issues means that more time and attention is available for reviewing educational programs. The Academy now routinely uses the KPI process in reviews of new applicants for accreditation, as well as to monitor the continuing performance of member institutions.

Suh and Larson provided a demonstration of the results obtained by the KPI process in practice, using data collected and analyzed earlier this year for a cooperating institution. They emphasized the compactness and reliability of the indicators used in the KPI review, arguing that they provide accreditors with accurate "dashboard indicators" of institutional health without the intrusiveness and massive documentation that characterize customary reporting systems.

Developed with the generous support of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, the KPI system takes its name from Samford University's (Birmingham, AL) comprehensive system of internal assessment. The KPI spreadsheets and mathematical algorithms are derived from indicators first developed and used by Moody's Investor's Services, which has also provided invaluable assistance and expertise to this project.

The Academy expects this innovative and time-saving process will continue to attract interest from other regional and specialized accrediting agencies

and is pleased to make information available to interested parties. For more details on the KPI project, to request a KPI information packet, or to arrange for a presentation on the KPI process, please contact Tom Suh at (202) 452-8611 or tsuh@aale.org.

Scholarly Activities at the Academy

Executive Director Michael Poliakoff's paper, "Competition and Greek Democracy," will appear this spring in the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung's publication of its 1999 Freiburg symposium, "*Gab es das griechische Wunder?*" Focusing on the funeral oration of Pericles in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Dr. Poliakoff illuminates in this article the integral relationship between competition and political freedom.

Last month, at the request of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Dr. Poliakoff revised the encyclopedia entry on boxing. Dr. Poliakoff's earlier work on sport history includes *Combat Sport in the Ancient World: Competition, Violence, and Culture*, published by Yale University Press and a broad range of articles.

He is currently working on a review of *Greek Ways* for *Crisis Magazine*.

Barzun's Latest Work Receives Critical Acclaim

The Academy is proud to note that Jacques Barzun, honorary chairman and a founding member of the Academy's Board of Trustees, continues to receive critical praise for his recently published book, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life* (Harper Collins, May 2000).

In what a *New York Times* reviewer called an "epic chronicle" of cultural history, Barzun traces the development of the West from the Protestant Reformation to the present. Though his title clearly indicates an overall direction to the West's trajectory, Barzun's tale defies easy categorization. "The West has been an endless series of opposites," he reminds his readers, "in religion, politics, art, morals, and manners, most of them persistent beyond their time of first conflict. To denounce does not free the self from what it hates, any more than ignoring the past shuts off its influence." Even Barzun's contention that the West has entered a time of decadence does not mean that the vitality or inventiveness of its individual members is diminished. Such a period is, on the contrary, "a very active time, full of deep concerns, but peculiarly restless, for it sees no clear lines of advance." It is Barzun's thesis that the appearance of confusion that accompanies decadent times is merely the necessary prologue to new, as yet unforeseen directions for human life and culture.

From Dawn to Decadence identifies (and is organized around) four critical turning points or revolutions – religious, monar-

chical, liberal, and social – that have given Western life its distinctive shape and texture over the last five hundred years. But these turn-



ing points or "emphatic signposts," as Barzun calls them, are not hard and fast boundaries. Instead, they should be seen as convenient tags for the characteristic "desires, attitudes, [and] purposes behind the events or movements" to which they refer. History, as Barzun sees and writes it, "is above all concrete and particular, not general and abstract. The stuff itself is the thoughts and deeds of once living beings." Appropriately, *From Dawn to Decadence* reflects Barzun's vast learning but was not principally written for an academic audience. It is instead, as he explains in his *Author's Note*, a book "for people who like to read about art and thought, manners, morals, and religion, and the social setting in which these activities have been and are taking place."

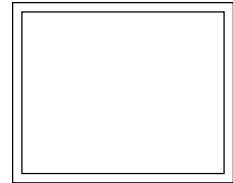
Jacques Barzun's career, spanning well over half a century, is among the most distinguished in American letters and academe. Born in France in 1907, Barzun came to the United States at the age of thirteen and was educated at Columbia University. He went on to serve his alma mater as provost and dean of faculties, where he was also the Seth Low Professor of History. A prolific writer and translator, Barzun has published over forty books, including (most recently) *Critical Questions*, a collection of essays written between 1940-1980; *A Stroll with William James*; and *The American University, How it Runs, Where it is Going*. He has received the Gold Medal for Criticism from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

A lifelong proponent and practitioner of liberal education, Barzun played a key role in the establishment of the Academy, the first and only agency explicitly authorized by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit outstanding liberal arts institutions and programs. The Academy recognizes Barzun's unmatched contributions to liberal arts education and scholarship through its biennial award for distinguished service to liberal education in his honor. The *Jacques Barzun Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Education* has been bestowed on Jaroslav Pelikan, distinguished historian of religion at Yale University, and William C. Friday, former president of the University of North Carolina as well as of the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust.

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Charitable Trusts and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

He cautioned that initiating self-assessment efforts might be daunting, but that schools would find it well worth the effort once they begin to establish a “culture of evidence” for their educational effectiveness - these programs “seem to run themselves” once established.

The Academy is pleased to have been represented at the NCHC Annual Conference by Dr. Poliakoff and looks forward to fruitful relationships with NCHC and its constituent organizations. For more information on AALE’s *Educational Effectiveness Protocols*, go to AALE’s “A New Model for Accreditation in the Liberal Arts” page on the website.

[Distance Ed from page 4]

online providers is receiving a liberal education, before turning to the question of whether the Academy’s revised, assessment-based accrediting standards for traditional programs were “modality-blind” and therefore easily adaptable to evaluating online programs. Issues were tabled until the next meeting, scheduled to take place this spring in a real-time, online chat environment.

Schedule of Events

April 19-21: AALE-PEW Fellows Meeting, The Cosmos Club, Washington, DC

May 3-6: Academy Board of Trustees and Council of Scholars Meeting and Retreat, St. John’s College, Annapolis, MD

November 2001: AALE General Membership Meeting, Washington, DC

Third Party Comment

The Academy invites comments from faculty, administrators, students and other members of the higher education community, as well as the public, on all aspects of its Standards and Criteria, Policies and Procedures, and other publications and informational materials, including its website. Please submit any comments to the Academy’s addresses above. All comments received will be acknowledged in writing and reviewed on a regular basis.