

AHIMA House of Delegates Proposed Resolution

- TOPIC:** Enhancement of HIM Academic Program Accreditation through CHEA Recognition
- INTENT:** To orient the AHIMA House of Delegates to the rationale and engage it as a partner in the process of enhancing HIM academic program accreditation.
- ADDRESSED TO:** 2003 HOD and all stakeholders in formal HIM education.
- ORIGINATOR:** AHIMA Council on Accreditation
- Approved by:** House of Delegates
- Date:** October 19, 2003

Background Information

As in other fields, college and university programs in health information management undergo specialized programmatic accreditation through a process of self-study and external peer review. Accreditation is a key element of higher education quality assurance, accountability and quality improvement. AHIMA's accreditation process is designed to determine whether or not a program has met or exceeded the published CAAHEP Standards and AHIMA curriculum as approved by the AHIMA House of Delegates, and whether a program is achieving its mission and stated purpose. Success results in an accredited HIM program.

Through its Council on Accreditation (COA) and Panel of Accreditation Reviewers, AHIMA has been conducting academic program reviews for initial and continuing accreditation since 1942, and currently makes recommendations to the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), which serves as the final authority on published Standards and awarding accreditation decisions.

CAAHEP was formed in 1994 to replace the American Medical Association's Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation (CAHEA) which had dissolved that year. At that time, many health-related professional associations that had been under the CAHEA umbrella chose to form their own accrediting agencies or commissions independent of CAAHEP, while AHIMA remained under the umbrella authority of the new CAAHEP organization. Since its founding, CAAHEP has served the needs of specialized accreditation in allied health education, encompassing 19 allied health disciplines¹. Ten (10) of these disciplines (53%), are at the non-degree certificate or associate degree level. Seven (7) are at the baccalaureate or post-baccalaureate certificate level and two (2) are at the masters level.

¹ Currently, CAAHEP accredits programs from the following health disciplines, including HIM: Anesthesiologist Assistant, Athletic Trainer, Cardiovascular Technology, Cytotechnology, Diagnostic Medical Sonography, EMT-Paramedic, Electroneurodiagnostic Technologist, Health and Fitness Specialist, Kinesiotherapy, Medical Assistant, Medical Illustrator, Ophthalmic Medical Technologist, Orthotic and Prosthetic Practitioner, Perfusion, Polysomnographic Technologist, Respiratory Therapy, Blood Bank Technologist, Surgical Assistant and Surgical Technology.

Under CAAHEP's accreditation umbrella, both AHIMA and the Council on Accreditation (of AHIMA) must maintain separate billable sponsorships as a professional organization and as a committee on accreditation under the CAAHEP system. The Council on Accreditation must routinely submit all accreditation recommendations to the CAAHEP Board for action, have all accredited programs officially posted on CAAHEP's website, and participate in an annual education meeting and conferences.

AHIMA now believes that independent recognition by the Council for Higher Education and Accreditation (CHEA), a private, nonprofit, non-government organization founded in 1996 as a specialized accrediting agency will better serve the needs of all HIM stakeholders, as well as the public, and is essential to enhance the prestige and value of HIM accreditation.

CHEA provides a process of recognition for regional, national and specialized accrediting organizations. It is the largest institutional higher education membership organization in the United States with over 3,000 colleges and universities, and more than 60 participating accrediting organizations, including recognition of CAAHEP. CHEA is the primary national voice for voluntary accreditation and quality assurance to the US Congress and the US Department of Education, the general public, opinion leaders, students and families. CHEA is a national leader in articulating emerging issues and quality assurance in the accreditation process.

Current accrediting organizations of significance to AHIMA, who are recognized members of CHEA include: Health Services-Accrediting Commission on Education for Health Services Administration, Dietetics-Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education, Occupational Therapy-Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, Business-Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, Physical Therapy- Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education, Computer Sciences-Computer Sciences Accreditation Commission, Clinical Laboratory Sciences-National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences, Public Health-Council on Education for Public Health, Pharmacy-American Council on Pharmaceutical Education, Distance Education-Accrediting Commission of Distance Education and Training, as well as the regional accrediting organizations such as Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to name a few.

CHEA provides to its recognized members not only a national voice on higher education issues, but is a source of data and information of value to accreditors and educators, publications, conferences, mediation and dispute-resolution services, and a best-practices database.

Achieving recognition by CHEA will require that AHIMA, rather than CAAHEP, assume responsibility for being accountable to the public served by accreditation. CHEA recognition will enhance our ability to improve the continuity, streamline the cycle time for stages of accreditation, and provide national benchmark data for programmatic improvement. It will require that more information about our accreditation policies, procedures, and expected outcomes (i.e. the accreditation status of HIM programs) be available to the public. To that end, we have begun expanding the amount of information available on the Website and are in the process of reviewing all practices with regard to how they conform to CHEA standards.

Resolution

Whereas, the scope of HIM practice and education has moved beyond its traditional allied health home because of the effect of information and communications technologies on the discipline and because of changes in academic institutions;

Whereas, today HIM academic programs in colleges and universities are found in schools of allied health, as well as schools of business, health administration, computer science, and health informatics;

Whereas, AHIMA has long demonstrated leadership in specialized programmatic accreditation for the health information management profession and believes that independent recognition by CHEA as a specialized accrediting agency will better serve the needs of all stakeholders and the public and is essential to enhance the prestige and value of HIM accreditation;

Whereas, the standards for recognition by Council for Higher Education and Accreditation (CHEA) require conformance to high standards for accountability and transparency that will affect current practices, some of which are under the authority of the House of Delegates;

Therefore, Be It

Resolved, That the AHIMA House of Delegates supports the recommendation of the Council on Accreditation and the Board of Directors to seek independent recognition by CHEA and will work hand in hand with the Council in the coming months to effect the changes to the bylaws and Standards that will be required to conform to CHEA's standards of recognition.

Reference: www.chea.org