



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

NOV 21 2005

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Cynthia A. Davenport
Executive Director
Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors
1020 West Byron Street, Suite 8G
Chicago, Illinois 60613-2987

Dear Ms. Davenport:

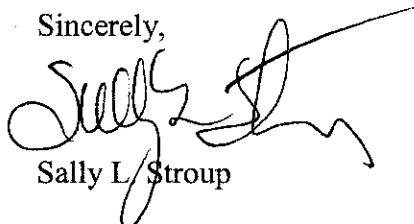
Thank you for your letter of October 27, 2005, to Secretary Margaret Spellings expressing some concerns with the Department's procedures for recognizing accrediting agencies. Your letter was referred to the Office of Postsecondary Education, which administers the recognition process.

You raise a concern that the Department may require actions on the part of agencies that differ from prior analyses when reviewing accrediting agencies' petitions for renewal of recognition. I am sure that you would agree that postsecondary education is not a static enterprise but changes in ways to better respond to the needs of its students. As accrediting agencies must at times make modifications in its policies and procedures to keep pace with changes within the community, the Department must also on occasion make modifications in what it requires of accreditors in response to changing circumstances.

In most cases the Department becomes aware of changes in accrediting agency practices at the time the agency submits a petition for renewal of recognition by the Secretary. The Department does not have an opportunity to discuss these changes in advance of their being implemented. For this reason, the Department must rely on the renewal process to ensure continued compliance with the letter and spirit of the Criteria for Recognition.

Improved communication between the Department and the accrediting community can contribute to better understanding when these circumstances arise. I know that the staff of the Accreditation and State Liaison unit participate in meetings and conferences with the accreditation community, and we will look for ways to take advantage of opportunities for discussion.

Sincerely,



Sally L. Stroup