

## Biographical Note

Leah K. Matthews, PhD  
Executive Director  
Distance Education Accrediting Commission

Submitted for consideration by INQAAHE

Dr. Leah Matthews is honored to submit her credentials to the INQAAHE for consideration as a member of the INQAAHE Board of Directors.

Dr. Matthews has served as the Executive Director of the Distance Education Accrediting Commission since April 2013. The DEAC is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). DEAC was founded in 1926 to promote best practices in setting educational standards for teaching and learning in distance education. Dr. Matthews' background and experience in higher education and accreditation is extensive and includes:

- Three years as Vice President for Recognition Services at CHEA where she directed the recognition process for sixty accreditors that provide regional, national and programmatic accreditation throughout the U.S. system of higher education and worked with higher education associations to address accountability, student achievement, outcomes assessment, transparency and other quality assurance-related issues;
- A total of twenty-five years of experience working within many areas of higher education: accreditation for public, private non-profit, and private-for profit higher education institutions; state and federal higher education authorities; higher education associations; and post-secondary education programs for military service members and family members; and teaching.

Dr. Matthews is careful and thorough in all her professional endeavors. Directing an accrediting organization with large distance learning institutions, such as the DEAC, is complex, detailed, political, and takes great skill. Dr. Matthews is ready to expand her contributions to the broader higher education community by lending her expertise to the members of INQAAHE. The combination of her many years of experience in higher education and her record of excellent performance in her profession make her an exceptional candidate for the INQAAHE Board of Directors.

## **Leah K. Matthews, PhD**

leah.matthews@deac.org

202-234-5100

### ACCREDITATION EXPERIENCE

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#### **Distance Education Accrediting Commission, Washington, DC • April 2013 - present**

##### **Executive Director**

Serves as Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) by providing leadership that achieves the DEAC's educational purposes of serving as a reliable authority as to the quality of education and training offered by institutions of distance education that it accredits and establishing and fostering high educational standards and ethical practices among such institutions. Administers the DEAC office, supervises its staff, provides timely information, advice and direction needed by DEAC to set strategy, approve budgets, develop accrediting standards, policies, procedures and make accreditation decisions, see to the implementation of actions determined by the Commission and perform such other duties related to the mission and purposes of DEAC as assigned by the Chair of the Board of Directors, its Executive Committee or the Commission. Maintains effective and harmonious relationships with the Commission, its staff, the U.S. Department of Education, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, state regulators, accredited institutions, other accrediting organizations, and other DEAC constituents.

#### **Council for Higher Education Accreditation, Washington DC • 2009 - 2013**

##### **Vice President for Recognition Services**

Provided direction and management of CHEA's recognition process, a system of quality review for sixty higher education accrediting agencies that includes regional, national career related, national faith-related and programmatic accreditors. Provided oversight and management of CHEA Consultative Services to assist member colleges and universities as they work with accreditation processes and systems. Responsible for providing information to CHEA constituents and the public regarding CHEA recognition. Worked with higher education associations and other organizations to address accountability, student achievement, transparency and other accreditation related issues. Conducted research projects that expanded CHEA's capacity to provide reliable, authoritative and timely national-level information on U.S. higher education and accreditation topics that included U.S. Department of Education recognition criteria, for-profit higher education, accretor autonomy, institutional accretor relationships and quality assurance in higher education.

**Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, Arlington, VA • 1998-2009**

**Director of Institutional Compliance & Development (2002-2009) Other positions held: Manager of Institutional Compliance, Compliance Analyst**

Supervised the integrity and accountability of accrediting processes that included on-site evaluations, Commission meetings, preparation of action letters, appeals panels, substantive change applications, accreditation workshops, student complaints, financial statement reporting, annual reporting, and notifications of accreditation decisions. Presented accreditation standards to institutions, evaluators, U.S. Department of Education officials and other interested parties. Coordinated and led the submission of two petitions for recognition by the U.S. Department of Education and requests to expand the ACCSC scope to include distance education and master's degrees. Responsible for staff performance evaluations and developed organizational and departmental budgets.

**OTHER EXPERIENCE**

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**United States Army, 17th Area Support Group, Camp Zama, Japan • 1993-1997**

**Director of Family Support Services (1995-1997) Other positions held: Director of Early Childhood Development, Community Liaison Officer**

Developed and administered policy, plans and regulations for the family support program, providing services to 5000+ military personnel, civilians and their families. Served as the Installation Commander's advisor and spokesperson on quality of life programs for Army family members in Japan. Directed process for child development centers to receive NAEYC accreditation, the first to receive accreditation in the Pacific region. Established current and long range program plans, integrating need for services, installation mission, troop strength, budgets and facilities. Supervised a management team responsible for a 60-person multinational staff funded by \$3M+ Congressional appropriations and \$1.5M in revenue. Directed a Child and Youth program used as a model for the Pacific region. Planned and executed annual three-day Army Family Services symposia with representatives from all Army Japan units.

**Abbottston Elementary School, Baltimore, Maryland • 1989-1992**

**Second Grade Teacher**

Selected by the Director of Early Intervention Studies at John Hopkins University to pilot innovative reading and math curriculum in an inner-city educational environment. Modeled teaching strategies and classroom techniques for local and national school officials. Selected as second-grade team leader after one year to coordinate curricula among all second-grade teachers. Initiated and directed numerous after-school programs including music and drama, reading and math enrichment, and drug prevention awareness.

## BOARD MEMBERSHIPS

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At-Large Member of the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) *Term: 2015-2018*

National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) *Term: 2015-2018*

Presidents' Forum Advisory Council of Excelsior College 2016-2019 *Term: 2016-2019*

## PRESENTATIONS

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Career College Association Leadership Institute, *Leadership in Accreditation*, Reston, Virginia, 2010.

International Conference on Contemporary Challenges in Higher Education, Meridian International Center, *U.S. Higher Education Quality Assurance Challenges*, Washington, DC, 2011.

U.S. Department of State International Visitor Leadership Program *Key Policy Frameworks in U.S. Higher Education and Accreditation*, Washington, DC, 2012.

Vocational Education Leadership Training for the Chinese Institute of Technology, *Postsecondary Technical Education and Accreditation in the U.S.*, Washington, DC, 2012.

Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) Annual Conference *Competency Based Assessment and Online Learning* in Baltimore, Maryland, September 2013.

George Mason University Guest Lecture *U.S. Higher Education and Accreditation* Fairfax, Virginia, September 2013.

California Association of Private Postsecondary Schools 29th Annual Conference *Accreditor Issues for the Next Two Years*, Pasadena, California, October 2013.

Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET) Annual Conference *Views from Accreditation*, Orlando, Florida, October 2013.

Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE) Annual Conference *Assuring Quality in Distance and Online Education*, St. Mary's, Antigua, November 2013.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Annual Conference *Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and Implications for Accreditation* Washington, DC, January 2014

Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) Annual Conference, *Straight Talk on State Authorization*, Las Vegas, NV, February 2014

European Association for Distance Learning (EADL) *The Changing Landscape of Distance Education in the United States*, Edinburgh, Scotland, May 2014.

Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities (APSCU) Annual Conference *Accreditation in a Restless and Impatient World*, Las Vegas, Nevada, June 2014

WCET Annual Meeting *Accreditation and Higher Education* Portland, Oregon, November, 2014.

Higher Education Capital Roundtable, *Accreditation in the Investment Environment* New York, New York, January 2015.

Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) Annual Conference, *A Changing Paradigm for Accreditation*, Nashville, Tennessee, February 2015.

California Association of Private Postsecondary Schools (CAPPS) Education Policy Forum, *Distance Education State Authorization*, Sacramento, California, April 2015.

Council for Social Work Education (CSWE) Annual Conference *Distance Education and the Future Expectations for Social Work Education*, Indianapolis, Indiana, April 2015.

Elsevier Accreditation Forum, *Accreditation at the Center of Policy Discussions at Federal and State Levels*, Chicago, Illinois, April 2015.

National Association of State Administrators and Supervisors of Private Schools (NASASPS) Annual Conference, *Saved by the Pause: State Authorization Negotiated Rulemaking One Year Later*, Savannah, Georgia, April 2015.

European Association for Distance Learning (EADL) Annual Conference *Distance Education in the U.S. – Innovations, Disruptions or Both?* Prague, Czech Republic, May 2015.

National University Technology Network (NUTN) *Accreditation and Distance Education Substantive Changes*, Dallas, Texas, March 2016.

United States Distance Learning Association (USADLA) Annual Conference, *Quality Assurance Issues in Higher Education; The National Outlook*, St. Louis, Missouri, May 2015.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Annual Conference, *How Does Accreditation Deal with Substandard Institutions*, Washington, D.C., January 2016.

WCET Leadership Conference, *Quality Review of Emerging Nontraditional Providers of Distance Education*, Salt Lake City, Utah, June 2016.

Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditation (ASPA) Annual Conference, *Good Accreditation Practice in Distance Education Review*, Arlington, Virginia, September 2016.

Online Learning Consortium (OLC) Annual Conference *Alternative Credentialing in the United States: A Lens On Experiential Learning* (co-presented with Dr. Jill Buban), Orlando, Florida, October 2016.

## EDUCATION

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George Mason University      PhD In Education

Dissertation: *Toward Institutional Autonomy or Nationalization? A Case Study of the Federal Role in U.S. Higher Education Accreditation* (2012)

University of Oklahoma      Master of Public Administration

Westminster College      Bachelor of Arts (Music and Education)