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**A Clarion Call for the University Council to Serve as a
Specialized Professional Association (SPA) for Higher
Education Institutions with Programs in Workforce and
Human Resource Education**

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The words of Charles Dickens have profound meaning for higher education institutions in America, especially those that prepare personnel for career positions in workforce and human resource education. As Dickens so eloquently writes in the 1859 Tale of Two Cities, “it was the best of times, it was the worst of times” for those of us in the profession. These are the best of times for the University Council to seize the moment to serve as a specialized professional association (SPA) or board for existing and future Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Workforce Education programs, yet on the other hand, these are the worst of times for programs in career and technical education that have been retrenched and in many cases eliminated from higher education institutions.

As we journey further into the millennium, there is a need to take action to revitalize our profession; to enhance the future for the next generation of leaders in education; and .reverse the trend of program retrenchment and elimination. More importantly, as leaders in the field, we need to actually lead by providing leadership to realign the mission, purpose and values of our organization to sustain national credibility. Other professional organizations have reinvented themselves, why not the University Council for Workforce and Human

Resource Education (UCWHRE). The University Council, as it is commonly called, consists of 18 doctoral granting institutions in career and technical education, workforce education, and human resource development programs. The current membership consists of the following institutions: 1) Auburn University, 2) Clemson University, 3) Colorado State University, 4) University of Arkansas, 5) University of Georgia, 6) University of Idaho, 7) Louisiana State University, 8) University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 9) University of Minnesota, 10) University of North Texas, 11) Ohio State University, 12) Oklahoma State University, 13) Penn State University, 14) Southern Illinois University, 15) Texas A&M University, 16) Valdosta State University, 17) Virginia Tech University, and 18) Western Michigan University.

The UCWHRE can provide tremendous benefits for member institutions including: certifying accreditation as being among the best programs in the field, providing opportunities to collaborate or network with resource persons who are leading scholars in the global community, pursuing grant opportunities through collaborative partnerships among council members, and generating ideas to improve curriculum and faculty development, etc. The University Council members are active leaders and recognized scholars who provide professional service to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Research in Career and Technical Education, Association of Career and Technical Education, and International Vocational Education and Training Association, as well as many other organizations.

Other professional organizations have found themselves at similar crossroads as the University Council finds itself today. You may recall that counseling education was once a component of vocational education under the auspices of vocational guidance, and later referred to as guidance counselors, but now, they are called counselor educators.

Moreover, their organizational metamorphosis has been more than a name change as evidenced by the National Council for Accreditation of Teachers (NCATE), as well as the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

The CACREP approach is a good prototype or model for the UCWHRE to emulate because of its mission to promote professional competence through the development of preparation standards, encouragement of excellence in program development, and accreditation of professional preparation programs (CACREP 2009). As a result of the organization's commitment to the profession, the CACREP core curriculum is used as the basis for the educational requirements of most state licensing regulations and represents the comprehensive foundation of the testing questions used in the National Counselor Exam for Licensure and Certification. CACREP standards are centered on the following areas:

- The Learning Environment: Structure and Evaluation
- Professional Identity
- Professional Practice
 - Addiction Counseling
 - Career Counseling
 - Clinical Mental Health Counseling
 - Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling
 - School Counseling
 - Student Affairs and College Counseling
- Doctoral Standards: Counselor Education and Supervision
 - The Learning Environment
 - Professional Identity
 - Professional Practice
 - Doctoral Learning Outcomes

Technology Education is another example of a professional organization that reinvented themselves from the

traditional industrial arts programs by moving out of the shadows of trade and industrial education. A similar argument can be made with special education programs. Consequently, we believe that the stage is being set for the UCWHRE to wake up and recognize the social and economic values that exist in serving as a special accreditation agency for higher education institutions with programs in workforce and human resource education. Specialized Professional Associations represent the highest levels of professional performance and are charged with accrediting member institutions in areas of program standards and quality. The importance of accreditation cannot be understated in professional fields. According to Webster (2009), *accredit* means “to give official authorization to or approval of; to provide with credentials; to recognize as maintaining standards that qualify the graduates for admission to more specialized institutions or for professional practice.” UCWHRE has the opportunity to greatly serve the members by adopting standards of professional practice and becoming an accrediting body of excellence for its members. Accordingly, we propose that UCWHRE consider establishing a set of standards which an educational institution or program submits to a voluntary, non-governmental review to determine whether it meets those accepted standards of quality.

Other professional organizations within the field of education have made similar changes and offer established methods of credentialing or accrediting their institutional members. In addition to CACREP, another professional organization that can serve as a model for UCWHRE is the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). The AVMA, established in 1863, is a not-for-profit association representing more than 78,000 veterinarians working in private and corporate practice, government, industry, academia, and uniformed services. The AVMA is designated by the United States Department of Education as the accrediting body for the

28 colleges of veterinary medicine in the United States. According to the AVMA website, the AVMA educational standards of excellence are recognized worldwide as the “gold standards” in veterinary education. Many foreign veterinary schools use the AVMA model for their veterinary school curricula (AVMA 2009). Within veterinary medicine the AVMA Council for Education develops standards for and conducts reviews of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine programs in schools of veterinary medicine. An institution is considered fully accredited when it is found to meet these standards. Accreditation by the AVMA Council of Education and Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities represents the highest standards of achievement for veterinary medical education in the United States. Institutions that earn accreditation confirm their commitment to quality and continuous improvement through a rigorous and comprehensive peer review.

The authors of this paper propose a similar arrangement for UCWHRE. The criteria and/or standards for assessment or accreditation can be developed using the standards and accreditation models from NCATE, CACREP, or AVMA as prototypes to initiate the process. Following the AVMA format, UCWHRE could establish a similar Council on Education with an amendment to the organization bylaws or constitution. Similarly, the UCWHRE Council could establish standards for accreditation that might be developed through a rigorous and high-quality peer review accreditation process of member institutions utilizing the same philosophical approach as the AVMA Council on Education.

Like CACREP, the AVMA has established standards for accreditation. The AVMA Council on Education’s accreditation standards are based on the following areas:

- Organization
- Finances

- Facilities and Equipment
- Clinical / Practical Resources
- Library / Information Resources
- Students
- Admission
- Faculty
- Curriculum
- Research Programs
- Outcomes Assessments

These areas are germane to veterinary medicine, they will need to be adapted to meet the needs of UCWHRE in establishing standards for accreditation.

To implement the accreditation process, perhaps institutions that are members of the University Council would be expected to conduct a self-study to show evidence of compliance with UCWHRE standards and prepare for an on-site visit to verify written information in their respective self-studies. Each institution would be expected to pay a modest annual fee of approximately \$2,000 with full site visits every seven years. The visiting team would consist of three University Council members who are also members of the Council of Education with experience in program evaluation and assessment. The visiting team would spend two to three days for each on-site visit to verify information and submission of final report to UCWHRE and the institution seeking accreditation.

Another consideration for the membership of the University Council might be to expand the membership to include institutions with quality CTE teacher education, leadership, or human resources development at the master's level. These institutions could bring valuable perspective to the organization, while broadening the capacity of the council to oversee the adoption or implementation of the accreditation

criteria at less than doctoral granting institutions. An accreditation process and national recognition of their programs may be highly motivational to these institutions towards becoming members of UCWHRE.

We have shared our concerns, now it's your turn to discuss this issue with others and take action. What is your position (pro or con, but not both) concerning the UCWHRE serving as a specialized professional association for higher education institutions with programs in both workforce and human resource education? Also, what is your position (pro or con, but not both) concerning expanding UCWHRE membership to master's level institutions with programs in both workforce and human resource education?

We need to hear from you. More importantly, your constructive comments are welcomed and appreciated.

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