

## UNOFFICIAL OBSERVERS OF VISITING COMMITTEES

From time to time the Commission permits individuals to observe evaluation visits. Such participation is solely for the professional development of the individual and for the benefit to be gained by the observer's institution. The observer's objective is to understand the evaluation process rather than to appraise a particular institution, and his or her role is therefore different from that of the visiting committee appointed by the Commission.

To avoid confusion or misunderstanding about the role and responsibilities of an observer, the Commission has established the following procedures:

- The institution and visiting committee chair are always consulted in advance before an observer is permitted to join the visiting committee.
- Before the visit, the institution provides the observer with the same self-study materials as those sent to the visiting committee, and the committee chair makes available necessary information about the schedule and other arrangements for the visit. The Commission provides a copy of its policies and procedures to the observer.
- The observer may attend the visiting committee orientation session and other committee meetings and may accompany committee members on their interviews with various institutional groups. It is understood, however, that the institution, committee chair, or any committee member may decline to have the observer present at specific interviews or meetings where the presence of an observer could adversely affect the productivity of the meeting. At appropriate times, the observer may ask questions of the committee members about the evaluation process, but may not conduct interviews with institutional representatives or offer observations or judgments to the institution.
- The observer notifies the committee chair of his or her schedule during the visit.
- The institution or committee chair may at any time withdraw the privilege of the observer to participate.
- The observer does not take part in committee discussions related to the evaluation of the institution and does not vote on accreditation recommendations and does not participate in the preparation of the visiting committee's report.
- Institutional information disclosed to or in the presence of the observer is held in the strictest confidence.
- The institution is not responsible for any hotel, food, transportation or other expenses of the observer; all such costs are borne directly by the observer.