EVALUATING FOREIGN EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS IN THE UNITED STATES: PERSPECTIVES ON THE HISTORY OF THE PROFESSION

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History of Foreign Educational Credential Evaluation

The federal (national) government of the United States has no authority over education at any level. Its only official role related to education is to set conditions for the provision of federal money for research, educational facilities, student financial aid, and similar education-related activities. For this reason the United States cannot legally be a party to any bilateral or multilateral agreement concerning the acceptance of educational qualifications.

The sole authority for accepting or rejecting courses and degrees from any educational institution (whether located within the United States or outside of it) is the educational institution, state licensing board, governmental agency, professional association, employer, or credential evaluation agency to which an applicant has applied.

Historical Context

Prior to World War II, small numbers of people from other countries came to the United States for an educational experience. Most of them did not seek a degree. They came to improve their English proficiency, learn about American geography, history, and culture, and perhaps take a course or two at an educational institution. Then they returned home to continue their education.

The massive destruction of the educational systems of Europe and Asia during World War II changed this situation. Universities in war-torn countries did not have sufficient facilities and faculty to handle the demands for higher education from their citizens, including their former military personnel.

The role the United States had played in defending the nations of Europe and Asia was held in high esteem. That esteem was extended to the U.S. system of tertiary (postsecondary) education.

Following World War II, the U.S. government provided funds for education in the United States for selected persons from Europe and Japan, an activity that was later extended to other countries through the Fulbright program.

The Fulbright Act, authored by Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, was passed by Congress in 1946. The first Fulbright Program participants were selected in 1948. In that year Congress supplemented the Fulbright Act with the U.S. Education and Educational Exchange Act (also known as the Smith-Mundt Act).

Since 1948, the governments of many other countries have also provided funding for study abroad for their citizens and for the citizens of other countries.

In the 1960s, as the former European colonies in Africa and Asia gained independence, many of their citizens sought educational opportunities in the United States as an alternative to the limited opportunities at home.

As a result of these post-war and post-independence situations, citizens of other countries began to come to the United States to obtain a university degree, not just an educational experience. At first there were relatively few, but the numbers grew quickly, to 25,000 by 1948. The United States became then, and still remains, the primary destination for people seeking tertiary education outside of their home country. In the 2009-2010 academic year, the total number of foreign students in the United States was 690,923, which was 23.0% of the approximately three million students studying outside of their home country at that time. The number increased to 723,277 in 2010-2011.

The reasons why universities and colleges in the United States admit foreign students have evolved significantly since the end of World War II. Then the primary goal was to provide educated citizens for other countries (especially those in the developing world) to promote economic and social development and to foster world peace.
through shared educational experiences. Now the economic health of U.S. educational institutions and the health of the U.S. economy are significant driving forces.

At many U.S. institutions, the current major goal of admitting foreign students is to increase enrollment, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (the STEM fields) and especially in graduate degree programs in those fields.

An analysis of data for the 2009-2010 academic year by NAFSA: Association of International Educators [NAFSA] estimated that foreign students and their dependents contributed approximately $18.78 billion to the U.S. economy that year. Wisconsin's share was $216.9 million.

Development of the Profession

Prior to the late 1940s, foreign student admissions did not exist as a distinct administrative field. After World War II, the rapidly increasing numbers of foreign students seeking a U.S. degree made it necessary for universities and colleges to evaluate the prior educational achievements of their foreign-educated applicants to determine the appropriate placement for them into U.S. degree programs.

At most institutions the responsibility for foreign educational credential evaluation and student placement was initially assigned to the Office of the Registrar. Over time the responsibility for undergraduate applicants was gradually transferred to the Office of Admissions and the responsibility for graduate applicants was transferred to the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School. Some institutions developed a centralized office to handle both undergraduate and graduate applicants, with a title such as Office of Graduate and Foreign Admissions or Office of Foreign Student Services.

The Role of Credential Evaluation

The admission of foreign students to universities and colleges in the United States has two major components: the evaluation of foreign educational credentials, and the administrative process that converts an applicant for admission into an enrolled student. Sometimes these two components are separate functions. Sometimes they are combined into one person's duties.

The credential evaluation component also exists outside of the academic community: at state licensing boards and other types of governmental agencies, at professional associations, and at private foreign educational credential evaluation services which assist institutions and agencies that do not have in-house expertise.

The admission of foreign students to degree programs at U.S. universities and colleges, and the evaluation of foreign educational credentials to determine each applicant's admissibility and educational placement, began to evolve as an administrative specialty after World War II. During the period 1955 to 1984, this administrative specialty became a profession by developing:

- A knowledge base: theoretical and applied comparative education, admissions test data, English proficiency test data, and immigration regulations and procedures.
- A set of skills unique to itself: evaluating the foreign educational credentials of individual applicants and comparing their qualifications to the requirements for admission to specific educational programs.
- Self-imposed professional and ethical standards.
- A commitment to the good of society: to individual educational institutions, to other admissions officers, to foreign students, and to the societies to which the foreign students would return.
The Credential Evaluation Process

When foreign-educated persons are considered for admission to an educational institution in the United States, for licensure in a licensed profession, or for membership in a professional association, the administrative process is more complicated than it is for U.S.-educated applicants. Evaluators must carefully consider three important issues when reviewing foreign credentials: 1) Identifying the nature and the official status of each tertiary educational institution an applicant previously attended; 2) Determining whether or not the educational credentials submitted by an applicant are authentic; and 3) Identifying the nature of the education the educational credentials represent.

1. Identifying the nature and the official status of each tertiary educational institution an applicant previously attended.

It is relatively easy to identify the nature and official status of tertiary educational institutions in the United States. U.S. accrediting organizations provide information concerning their members, and the American Council on Education publishes an annual directory, Accredited Universities and Colleges in the United States.

There is no comparable single source of information concerning tertiary educational institutions in other countries.

Some institutions that issue educational credentials do not actually exist. Using the Internet, phantom universities operate in cyberspace. Some of them operate under a dozen different names, sometimes names that are very similar to the names of legitimate institutions. Some phantom institutions create organizations that “accredit” both themselves and legitimate institutions, leading naive persons to conclude that the accrediting organization must be legitimate.

Some tertiary institutions do exist but are not officially recognized as degree-granting by the agency that has jurisdiction over tertiary education in the country in which their students are educated. If an institution exists in the United States but is not officially recognized as degree-granting, it will be absent from directories of accredited institutions. For example: the following tertiary educational institutions exist in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, but they are not included in directories of accredited institutions:

| American College of Chemosurgery, Inc. | High-Tech Institute |
| Baptist College of Ministry          | St. Martins College and Seminary |
| Darryl Lynn Hines Academy            | Wisconsin Institute for Torah Study |

These institutions may provide instruction that is useful for their students, but their graduates do not have an academic degree from an officially recognized degree-granting institution.

The same situation exists in other countries. In the absence of comprehensive directories of officially recognized degree-granting institutions, it is difficult to determine whether or not a specific institution has such recognition.

If an institution is public, chances are good that it is officially recognized to award degrees. But in many countries an institution authorized to award officially-recognized degrees is also permitted to offer programs that lead to unrecognized degrees, diplomas or certificates.

If an institution is private, it might be officially recognized as degree-granting. Or it might only be permitted to operate. The difference is significant. To be considered officially recognized as degree-granting, a private institution must have been reviewed by the same agency that confers official degree-granting recognition on public universities, using the same standards and procedures. If a country does not have a public university,
then there are no relevant standards and procedures. In such cases, a private institution cannot obtain official
degree-granting recognition that merits acceptance of its courses and degrees elsewhere.

2. Determining whether or not the educational credentials submitted by an applicant are authentic.

When a U.S.-educated applicant for further education, professional licensure, or membership in a professional
association is asked to submit official educational credentials, the administrator requesting them expects to
receive the credentials directly from the educational institution(s) involved. Credentials that have been in the
applicant's possession are usually not accepted.

In many other countries, universities and secondary schools do not send official educational credentials to
third parties. Their former students are given one official set of documents. The students are expected to have
copies of those documents prepared outside of the university as needed, requesting assistance from gazzetted
officials, notary publics, police officers, and similar agents. These agents can certify that a copy of an
educational credential matches the original from which it was made, but they cannot verify the authenticity of
the original. Only the issuing institution can do that.

When educational credentials are submitted directly by an applicant, the recipient needs to determine their
authenticity. Were they actually issued by the educational institution named thereon? Or were they
counterfeited or unofficially created in some other way? If they are authentic, are they still in the original
form? Or have they been altered?

3. Identifying the nature of the education the educational credentials represent.

Educational credentials can represent completion of many types of education: primary, secondary, or tertiary
(postsecondary); academic, technical, vocational, in-service, or adult education; full-time or part-time; part of a
certificate, diploma, or degree program, or study not related to a formal educational qualification.

An evaluator of foreign educational credentials needs to determine the role that a foreign educational
institution plays in its country's educational system, and the role that the applicant’s educational credentials
play within that system. The evaluator also needs to determine the quantity of education an educational
credential represents, and the quality of an applicant’s performance.

There are more than 200 educational systems in the world, and they are constantly changing. Educational
terminology has no standard meaning. Words that refer to secondary education in one country can refer to
tertiary (university-level) education in another country. For example:

The word college refers to a tertiary educational institution in the United States. It refers to a secondary school
in French-speaking and Spanish-speaking countries.

The word bachelor represents completion of a university-level program of study at least four years in duration
in the United States. It represents completion of secondary education in French-speaking and Spanish-
speaking countries. It represents completion of three years of university-level study in many countries in
Europe.

The word master represents completion of advanced university education in the United States. In other
countries it can represent completion of a secondary school program that trains primary school teachers. In
Scotland it can represent completion of the first university degree program, four years in duration. In England
it can represent an honorary degree that does not require completion of any academic work.
In addition, quantitative information (credits, units, etc.) and qualitative information (grades, marks, etc.) differ from country to country, from institution to institution within a country, and even from one academic division to another within one institution.

**Necessary Resources**

To serve both the interests of a foreign-educated applicant and the interests of the U.S. educational institution, governmental agency, or professional association to which the applicant has applied, a foreign educational credential evaluator must acquire and appropriately interpret comprehensive information pertaining to the applicant's educational credentials and the institution(s) which issued them.

Educational credentials are issued in a multitude of languages. One person cannot possibly read each language proficiently, so some reliance upon translations is inevitable. However, translators are not always proficient, conscientious, accurate or honest. Therefore a familiarity with educational documentation in every language is an absolute necessity, as is a comprehensive collection of foreign language dictionaries to assist in verifying the accuracy of translations.

To correctly identify educational institutions and programs and the authenticity of educational credentials submitted by applicants requires a current and comprehensive collection of reliable information, resources, and contacts, and the expertise to both find and interpret information.

The first comprehensive published resource was *Educational Systems of the World* by Martena Tenney Sasnett (University of Southern California Press, 1952). This 838-page publication described primary, secondary, and tertiary education (systems, institutions, programs, and grading practices) in every independent country and in most colonies. It also included specific recommendations for the academic placement of foreign-educated applicants into undergraduate and graduate degree programs in the United States.

The only other comprehensive published resource in this field is the 1,550-page *The Educational Systems of Africa*, by Martena Tenny Sasnett and Inez Hopkins Sepmeyer (University of California Press, 1966).

Prior to 1970, foreign educational credential evaluators were assisted by smaller publications provided by the Comparative Education Section [CES] of the U.S. Office of Education. Prior to 1994, they were also assisted by publications, workshops, and training programs offered by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO] and the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs [NAFSA] (now known as NAFSA: Association of International Educators), both funded by the Office of Student Support Services [OSSS] of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs [CU] of the U.S. Department of State.

Since 1970, and especially since 1994, it is more difficult to obtain current, accurate and comprehensive information concerning foreign educational systems, institutions, and programs. Most of the printed information now available is provided by private foreign educational credential evaluation services.

**U.S. Office of Education**

From the beginning in 1867, OE staff members published information on the educational systems of other countries, both as parts of regular reports issued by the Commissioner of Education and as separate bulletins, circulars, and monographs. The monographs were usually concerned with topics of general interest to governmental agencies, educational planners, and professors of comparative education.

By the 1940s, the responsibility for keeping informed about educational developments in other countries was assigned by OE to its Comparative Education Section [CES], at times known instead as the Comparative Education Branch [CEB].

CES employed comparative education specialists, usually persons with a doctoral degree in comparative education; research assistants, usually persons with a master’s degree in comparative education or a master’s degree in a field related to education or to social studies research; and clerical support staff.

In 1969, CES had 25 staff members: six comparative education specialists, six research assistants, and 13 clerical support staff. Each comparative education specialist was responsible for one geographic area: Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Far East and South Asia, Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, or Western Hemisphere.

The major responsibility of CES employees was to collect research materials and data concerning all of the educational systems of the world, to publish research studies of various types, and to answer requests for specific information concerning the educational systems of other countries and concerning individual educational institutions. Beginning in the mid 1950s, OE publications began to include the kinds of information that were needed to evaluate the educational credentials of individual applicants, such as the nature and level of individual educational institutions and programs, the identification of officially recognized tertiary level degree-granting institutions, the official names of secondary-level and tertiary-level certificates, diplomas, and degrees, and admission requirements, graduation requirements, and grading scales.

In 1919, CES employees received a request to evaluate the educational credentials of one foreign-educated person. This single request evolved into the Foreign Credential Evaluation Service [FCES] (also known as the Foreign Credential Advisory Interpretation Service [FCAIS]). A logical byproduct of the CES research function, FCES was responding to 5,000 requests per year by 1960; 8,500 by 1965; 14,000 by 1967. The number of requests estimated for 1969 was 17,000 to 20,000. By early 1969, FCES was absorbing 65% of CES staff time.

Requests for an evaluation report could be addressed to FCES by anyone who had an interest in learning the U.S. equivalent of the educational qualifications represented by a set of foreign educational credentials. This free service was used by universities and colleges, secondary schools, agencies of the federal government and state governments, private organizations, professional associations, and employers who wanted to obtain the information needed to make an education-related decision concerning an applicant or client. Individuals also submitted their own foreign educational credentials in order to determine their eligibility for various types of further education, professional licensure, or employment.

An FCES report consisted of a one-page check list. The options were:

- Completion of grade ___.
- A high school diploma.
- Completion of __ years of postsecondary vocational training.
- Completion of __ years of postsecondary academic work.
- An Associate degree.
- A Bachelor’s degree in _____________.
- Completion of ___ years of graduate work.
- A Master’s degree in ___________________.
- Completion of ___ years of advanced graduate work.
- A Ph.D. degree.
- Other: ________________________________.
No additional information was provided. University personnel who became acquainted with one of the comparative education specialists through their participation in annual conferences of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO] or their service on the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials [Council] were able in most cases to obtain additional background information via telephone or (occasionally) correspondence, sometimes without formally requesting an evaluation report.

OE never requested a budget appropriation to support FCES. It was supported solely by diverting funds allocated to the regular research activities of CES. CES had also acquired other duties that were not directly related to keeping informed about educational developments in other countries.

In 1963, the Commissioner of Education requested Education and World Affairs [EWA] to examine the international dimensions of OE. EWA was a private, nonprofit educational organization, established in 1962 to study, analyze, and assist in strengthening the international teaching, research, and service dimensions of universities and colleges in the United States. EWA was funded by the Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation, supplemented by special research contracts from federal agencies and private organizations.

The EWA study of OE focused on determining the role that OE should play in helping educational institutions in the United States define and fulfill their international responsibilities. In its report, submitted in the fall of 1964, EWA recommended that CES research activities should be increased and strengthened, and that FCES should be curtailed or, if possible, eliminated.

Early in 1966, OE announced that FCES would be curtailed, beginning 1 July 1966 (the beginning of the federal government’s fiscal year 1967), and that it would be terminated completely by 1 July 1968. A conference on Foreign Credential Interpretation and Educational Studies, called by OE, was held in Washington DC 6-7 April 1966, at which representatives from several universities and colleges and educational organizations were officially informed of the OE decision.

The conference participants supported OE’s plans to increase CES research activities, but they strongly disagreed with the decision to terminate FCES because that would make it more difficult for them to make sound evaluations of the educational credentials of their foreign-educated applicants. OE responded that, because of the expanding international activities of U.S. institutions and agencies, and because the federal government was considering an expansion of its role in international education, OE would continue FCES for the present time.

OE and the conference participants agreed that together they would develop plans for an alternative service to supplement or replace FCES. However, little was done. In the spring of 1967, OE again announced that FCES would be terminated, possibly to be replaced by an OE contract with a private agency.

In the summer of 1967, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO], the College Board, and the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs [NAFSA] obtained a grant from the U.S. Department of State to analyze the work of FCES, particularly in relation to the requests it received from universities and colleges. The analysis was conducted 13 July through 18 August 1967 by Richard Dremuk, then Assistant University Dean for Graduate and Foreign Admissions at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Mr. Dremuk concluded that FCES provided an important service to educational institutions. He recommended that FCES be continued, with adequate staff and funding, either administered within OE or transferred to a private agency.

The Commissioner of Education asked the National Liaison Committee on Foreign Student Admissions [NLC] to submit one or more proposals for establishing an alternative to FCES. On 7 March 1968, the members of the NLC (AACRAO, College Board, Council of Graduate Schools [CGS], Institute of International Education [IIE], and NAFSA) reviewed the Dremuk report and OE’s plans to terminate FCES.
The NLC decided to ask OE for financial assistance for developing a proposal. A grant was approved on 26 September 1968. James S. Frey, then Director of Foreign Student Services at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, was asked to conduct *A Study to Determine the Feasibility of Establishing a Central Foreign Credentials Evaluation Service Under Non-Governmental Auspices*.

Mr. Frey conducted this study from 1 October 1968 through 15 February 1969. He obtained information from 120 college and university admissions officers through on-site meetings in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, Mount Pleasant (MI), New York, San Juan, Seattle, and Washington DC. He also collected information via mail from 103 admissions officers and from staff members of 18 state teacher certification boards and 15 state nursing registration boards. He met with staff members of the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington DC and with staff members of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service in Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Washington DC.

Mr. Frey concluded that a foreign credential evaluation service was needed; that it could operate outside of the government; that it ought to offer more information than was being provided by FCES; and that academic institutions and government agencies were willing to pay for this type of service. The NLC forwarded the report of this study to OE. No further action on this topic was ever reported publicly by OE or the NLC.

During the period 1966-69, CES spent almost all of its time on FCES and other projects. CES did not conduct any research on the educational systems of other countries, and no publications were produced. The information that formed the basis for FCES was becoming obsolete. Beginning in July 1969, FCES was curtailed. On 31 January 1970, FCES stopped accepting requests pertaining to educational credentials from countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Western Hemisphere. On 30 June 1970, FCES was terminated completely. A few years later CES was dissolved.

**United States Network for Education Information**

United States Network for Education Information [USNEI], an activity of the U.S. Department of Education, provides general information concerning the educational system of the United States to persons in other countries, and general information concerning education in other countries to persons in the United States. USNEI does not evaluate educational credentials, and it does not provide information or advice concerning credential evaluation. USNEI is the United States representative to the ENIC/NARIC network in Europe.

[European Network of Information Centres [ENIC] were established by the Council of Europe and UNESCO. National Academic Recognition Information Centres [NARIC] were established by the European Commission. Each country in Europe has an ENIC, a NARIC, or an ENIC/NARIC.]

**American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers**

The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO] was established in 1910.

Members of AACRAO were the early leaders in foreign student admissions and foreign educational credential evaluation in the United States, led by Herman A. Spindt (Director of Admissions, University of California-Berkeley), William H. Strain (Associate Director of Admissions, Indiana University-Bloomington), Robert E. Tschan (Pennsylvania State University), and Clyde Vroman (Director of Admissions, University of Michigan).
These AACRAO leaders realized that accuracy in the credential evaluation and admissions processes required comprehensive information concerning the educational systems of other countries. The frequency of changes in post-war and post-colonial educational systems and the rapid expansion of secondary and tertiary education world-wide had made Martina Tenney Sasnett’s *Educational Systems of the World* (1952) out-of-date. It was not likely that anyone would again be able to describe all of the educational systems of the world in one volume. More information was needed than Mrs. Sasnett had been able to provide. The Office of Education publications were too limited in number and frequency to cover all of the educational systems from which foreign-educated applicants were coming.

As a result of these factors, in 1955 AACRAO appointed a Committee on Evaluation of Foreign Student Credentials to develop a series of publications on foreign educational systems which would include recommendations for the placement of students from those systems into U.S. educational institutions. The result was AACRAO’s *World Education Series* [WES]. The first two WES volumes were published in 1957: Canada and Germany. They were preceded by a small volume entitled *Do-It-Yourself Evaluation of Foreign Student Credentials*, written by Mr. Strain.

To ensure that the placement recommendations in its WES volumes would be accepted by the members of other organizations interested in foreign students, AACRAO helped organize an inter-associational group to formally approve the placement recommendations. Known as The Council on Evaluation of Foreign Student Credentials [Council], it was later renamed National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials [Council].

One of the early publications in the WES series, *A Guide to the Admission and Placement of Foreign Students*, edited by Martena Tenney Sasnett, was published in March 1962 with the assistance of the Institute of International Education [IIE].

At its annual conference in Phoenix in 1966, AACRAO unveiled its reorganization into five administrative groups, to improve coordination of its activities. To encourage those members involved in the admission of foreign students to maintain their membership in AACRAO instead of (or in addition to) joining the newly-established Admissions Section [ADSEC] of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs [NAFSA], one of the new AACRAO administrative groups (Group II) was focused on international education.

Clyde Vroman, then Director of Admissions at the University of Michigan and AACRAO’s first Vice President for International Education, was asked why international education was a separate group within AACRAO. He responded: “NAFSA has established ADSEC. If we don’t make international education more visible in AACRAO they’ll steal all of our members and take over all of our projects.”

Under the leadership of its Vice President for International Education, AACRAO continued its World Education Series and added conference sessions and pre-conference workshops pertaining to the evaluation of foreign educational credentials.

AACRAO was represented on the National Liaison Committee on Foreign Student Admissions [NLC] by its Executive Director and by the Vice President of Group II. The other members of the NLC were the College Board, the Council of Graduate Schools, IIE, and NAFSA.

In 1968, AACRAO and NAFSA set up a Joint Committee on Workshops [JCOW] to develop and administer overseas credential evaluation workshops for members of both associations.

In 1989, AACRAO and NAFSA sponsored a research symposium in Oregon. Implementation of the recommendations of the Oregon Symposium resulted in the merger of JCOW with the AACRAO World Education Series [WES] into a new inter-associational committee: Projects for International Education Research [PIER]. Administrative duties related to PIER, predominantly financial administration, rotated between AACRAO and NAFSA.
In January 1991, in anticipation of the planned retirement of Inez Sepmeyer on 30 June at the age of 80, the International Education Research Foundation [IERF] in Los Angeles entered into negotiations with AACRAO to have AACRAO operate IERF as a separate corporation. The negotiations were unsuccessful. IERF remains an independent organization.

In March 1993, AACRAO established its Office of International Education Services [OIES], an in-house credential evaluation service. Originally set up to evaluate foreign educational credentials for educational institutions that were members of AACRAO, and for government agencies and professional associations, the activities of OIES were expanded in October 1997 to include evaluation reports for all purposes, including requests from individual foreign-educated applicants.

In the following years, AACRAO and NAFSA reduced their support of PIER and their support of the Council by limiting the number of their representatives to each and by reducing budgets for travel and attendance at meetings. In 1996, AACRAO replaced its support of PIER publications with its own new series of Country Profiles.

In 2001, in anticipation of the demise of both PIER and the Council, AACRAO established an International Publication Advisory Committee [IPAC] to replace the research and publication functions of PIER, and an International Evaluation Standards Council [IESC] to replace the placement recommendation processes of the Council. Both IPAC and IESC are staffed solely by members of AACRAO.

AACRAO and NAFSA terminated PIER on 16 January 2002. In 2006 they withdrew their support for the Council, which soon disbanded. These actions marked the end of inter-associational cooperation in providing information and assistance to foreign educational credential evaluators.

NAFSA: Association of International Educators

The National Association of Foreign Student Advisers [NAFSA] was established in 1948. During the next few years it developed local and regional affiliates. In the 1950s a consultant recommended that the NAFSA leadership disband its local and regional affiliates so that all of the energies of NAFSA members would be concentrated on building a strong national organization.

In 1964, another consultant convinced the NAFSA leadership that the organization would be stronger at the national level if it developed strong state and regional affiliates, because many potential members did not have the time and financial resources required to participate in conferences, workshops, and other activities at the national level. If the members of NAFSA's state and regional affiliates also became members of NAFSA, the increase in its membership would give NAFSA more clout with foundations, educational associations, corporations, and governmental agencies, all of which were identified as potential sources for grants and project funds.

NAFSA set up eleven regional associations. Within a few years Region I (the West coast region) was divided into Region I (Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska) and Region XII (California, Nevada, and Hawaii). In later years, the states belonging to Region IX were absorbed by Region VIII and Region IX was deleted.

In 1956, NAFSA established the Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language [ATESL], a professional section for teachers of English to speakers of other languages. In 1961, NAFSA established the Community Section [COMSEC], a professional section for persons involved in providing community hospitality and other types of non-academic support to foreign student advisers and to foreign students and scholars.
At its annual conference in Minneapolis in 1964, NAFSA established the Admissions Section [ADSEC], a professional section for persons involved in foreign student admissions. At the same time, NAFSA changed its name to National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, keeping the NAFSA acronym.

During the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, one section of the monthly NAFSA Newsletter was devoted to factual information of interest to ADSEC members, contributed by ADSEC members and edited by an ADSEC volunteer.

In 1964, NAFSA received the first of a series of grants from the Office of Student Support Services [OSSS] of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs [CU] of the U.S. Department of State to establish the NAFSA Field Service. The Field Service had two missions: to support the development of publications and other projects that would improve the professional skills of university and college personnel who work with foreign students, and to support projects that would improve the experiences of foreign students while they were in the United States. Emphasis was placed on pilot projects that could be replicated at other educational institutions. The Field Service was initially led by Katherine Bang (later known as Katherine Donovan). OSSS funding of the Field Service ended in the 1990s and the Field Service was terminated by NAFSA in 1996.

In 1965, ADSEC sponsored two one-day drive-in workshops for foreign student admissions officers: one in February, hosted by G. James Haas at Southern Illinois University, and one in March, hosted by James S. Frey at Marquette University. Each workshop dealt with both the credential evaluation process and the admissions process.

With financial assistance from OSSS, ADSEC launched a series of two-week intensive foreign educational credential evaluation workshops.

The first workshop, from 29 November to 10 December 1965, was hosted by A. Lee Ziegler at the Center for the Cultural and Technical Interchange Between East and West (of the University of Hawaii at Manoa in Honolulu). This workshop covered the educational systems of India, Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan. It had a dual purpose: to provide hands-on training for foreign educational credential evaluators, and to produce a comprehensive report on the foreign educational systems that were studied, including formal placement recommendations.

ADSEC conducted a second two-week workshop in Hawaii in December 1967, covering the educational systems of Cambodia, Indonesia, Korea, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, and a third two-week workshop in Puerto Rico in December 1968, covering the educational systems of Brazil, Central America, Colombia, and Venezuela.

In 1968, at the insistence of OSSS, their primary funding source, ADSEC and Group II (International Education) of AACRAO began to coordinate their activities pertaining to foreign student admissions, and to jointly sponsor new activities, through the AACRAO/NAFSA Joint Committee on Workshops [JCOW].

Between 1966 and 1969, members of ADSEC, led by G. James Haas (then at Indiana University-Bloomington) and James S. Frey (then at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), developed several Field Service publications designed to assist foreign student admissions officers with the credential evaluation and admissions processes, including A Guide to the Admission of Foreign Students and Guideline: Selection and Admission of Foreign Students. The latter was one section of a comprehensive NAFSA manual for university and college staff members who worked with foreign students. These publications and others that followed set out professional and ethical standards for foreign student admissions officers.

The Chair of ADSEC and the Executive Director of NAFSA represented NAFSA on the National Liaison Committee on Foreign Student Admissions [NLC]. The other members of the NLC were AACRAO, the College Board, the Council of Graduate Schools [CGS], and the Institute of International Education [IIE].
During the late 1960s, ADSEC and the NLC developed a series of regional Credential Evaluation Projects to coordinate the volunteer activities of ADSEC members who responded to requests for credential evaluation assistance from U.S. universities and colleges that enrolled fewer than 100 foreign students. The four regional projects were later combined to form the National Evaluation Project [NEP]. The NEP was replaced by an electronic listserv in the 1980s.

In 1989, AACRAO and NAFSA sponsored a symposium in Oregon on *Foreign Educational Systems: Future Directions in Research and Information Management*. The recommendations of the Oregon Symposium led to the merger of the AACRAO/NAFSA Joint Committee on Workshops [JCOW] and the AACRAO World Education Series [WES] into a new inter-associational committee: Projects for International Education Research [PIER]. Administrative duties related to PIER, predominantly financial administration, rotated between AACRAO and NAFSA.

In May 1990, NAFSA changed its name to NAFSA: Association of International Educators, keeping the same acronym.

In the following years, AACRAO and NAFSA reduced their support of PIER and their support of the Council by limiting the number of their representatives to each and by reducing budgets for travel and attendance at meetings. AACRAO and NAFSA terminated PIER on 16 January 2002. In 2006 they withdrew their support for the Council, which soon disbanded. These actions marked the end of inter-associational cooperation in providing information and assistance to foreign educational credential evaluators. Since then NAFSA has not been a significant provider of information and support for foreign student admissions officers or educational credential evaluators.

In 2004, NAFSA replaced its professional sections with Knowledge Communities [KC]. ADSEC was merged with the Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language [ATESL], the Community Section [COMSEC], and the Overseas Advisors [OSEAS] to form the Recruitment, Admissions, and Preparation [RAP] Knowledge Community. RAP activities are devoted to recruiting foreign students much more than to the evaluation of their educational credentials.

**National Liaison Committee on Foreign Student Admissions**

The National Liaison Committee on Foreign Student Admissions [NLC] was an inter-associational group of organizations interested in the admission of foreign students to universities and colleges in the United States. The members of the NLC were the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO], the College Entrance Examination Board [CEEB] (later known as the College Board), the Council of Graduate Schools [CGS], the Institute of International Education [IIE], and the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs [NAFSA] (later known as NAFSA: Association of International Educators).

The NLC was established after several workshops concerning the admission and placement of foreign students were sponsored by two or more of the organizations:

- **1963-64**: workshops at Georgetown University, Stanford University, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Texas, and the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago, sponsored by CEEB and IIE.

- **December 1964**: a workshop on the admission of Indian students, at the Hilton Hotel in Chicago, sponsored by AACRAO, CEEB, IIE, and NAFSA.
January 1966: a workshop on the admission and placement of students from Taiwan and Hong Kong, at the Radisson Hotel in Minneapolis, sponsored by AACRAO, CEEB, IIE, and NAFSA.

February 1966: a workshop on the admission and placement of students from the Middle East and North Africa, at Middle East House in Washington DC, sponsored by AACRAO, CEEB, IIE, NAFSA, and the American Friends of the Middle East [AFME].

AACRAO was represented on the NLC by its Executive Director and its Vice President of Group II (International Education). CEEB was represented by the Director of its International Office (in Washington DC). CGS was represented by its President and by the graduate dean of one of its member universities. IIE was represented by a Vice President. NAFSA was represented by its Executive Director and the Chair of ADSEC.

Between 1966 and 2006, the NLC sponsored many activities in support of the admission of foreign students, including in-service training workshops for student advisors at overseas counseling offices supported by the U.S. Department of State.

The National Liaison Committee on Foreign Student Admissions [NLC] has been replaced by The Liaison Committee [TLC], also known as The Liaison Group [TLG]. TLC is much less concerned with foreign student admissions than the NLC was.

Office of Student Support Services, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Beginning in the late 1940s, the Office of Student Support Services [OSSS] was a division of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs [CU] of the U.S. Department of State. During the 1970s, it became a division of the U.S. Information Agency [USIA] and then a division of the U.S. International Communication Agency [ICA]. Later it was transferred back to the U.S. Department of State. OSSS was responsible for identifying and supporting activities that would improve the learning and living experiences of foreign students in the United States.

In the early 1960s, Marita Houlihan (then director of OSSS) and Mary Ann Spreckelmeyer (Marita's deputy and eventual successor) were instrumental in obtaining financial assistance from CU to support the international education activities of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO] and the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs [NAFSA] (now known as NAFSA: Association of International Educators).

Funding from OSSS assisted AACRAO in publishing its World Education Series [WES], a series of single-country monographs on the educational systems of other countries.

OSSS also funded the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials [Council], a representative group of organizations and associations that had an interest in promoting international education. The Council developed placement recommendations to assist admissions officers and registrars in determining the admissibility of foreign-educated applicants and their placement within degree programs in the United States. The Council's placement recommendations were designed to accompany both AACRAO's WES volumes and books published by the Comparative Education Section [CES] of the U.S. Office of Education.

Funding from OSSS supported NAFSA's Field Service Program which developed publications, workshops, and on-site consultations to provide in-service training for foreign student admissions officers and foreign student
advisors. OSSS also supported NAFSA’s Coop Projects program which funded pilot projects designed to improve and expand the experiences of foreign students at U.S. universities and colleges, projects that could be replicated at other educational institutions.

Funding from OSSS also supported the Joint Committee on Workshops [JCOW], a joint venture of AACRAO and NAFSA. JCOW organized multi-country educational research and publication activities to provide information to foreign student admissions officers. JCOW was renamed Projects in International Education Research [PIER] as a result of the Oregon Symposium in 1989. PIER was disbanded by AACRAO and NAFSA on 16 January 2002.

OSSS also supported the National Liaison Committee on Foreign Student Admissions [NLC], an inter-association consulting activity of AACRAO, the College Board, the Council of Graduate Schools [CGS], the Institute of International Education [IIE], and NAFSA.

OSSS was instrumental in the establishment of educational advising services for prospective students in other countries, beginning in 1967-68 with offices throughout India in cooperation with the U.S. Educational Foundation in India [USEFI]. Now known as EducationUSA, this world-wide network is supported by OSSS-funded Overseas Advising Workshops and U.S.-Based Training [USBT] programs.

OSSS funding to AACRAO and NAFSA was significantly reduced in 1985 and terminated in 1994.

National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials

Universities and colleges in the United States had access to the publications produced by the U.S. Office of Education [OE] and to OE’s Foreign Credential Evaluation Service [FCES], and to publications on the educational systems of other countries such as Martena Tenney Sasnett’s *Educational Systems of the World* [1952], but there still was great diversity in the way U.S. educational institutions evaluated foreign educational credentials.

In 1955, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO] appointed a committee to develop publications on foreign educational systems, to include recommendations concerning how students from those systems should be placed in educational institutions in the United States.

The AACRAO committee wanted to coordinate the placement recommendations with other U.S. organizations concerned with the admission and placement of foreign-educated applicants. The committee organized a series of meetings which led to the establishment of the Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Student Credentials [the Council] in 1955.

The Council originally consisted of representatives from five organizations: AACRAO (three members), Association of American Colleges [AAC] (one), Association of Graduate Schools [AGS] (two), Institute of International Education [IIE] (one), and National Association of Foreign Student Advisors [NAFSA] (one). In addition, four organizations were represented as observers: American Council on Education [ACE] (one), College Entrance Examination Board [CEEB] (one), U.S. Department of State [State] (one), and the Comparative Education Branch [CEB] of the U.S. Office of Education [OE] (one).

In 1977, in response to suggestions made by Charles C. Hauch (Chief of CEB), the Council changed its name to the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials. The name change was made partly to reflect the Council’s nature as a national organization representing organizations and agencies involved in international education in the United States and partly to acknowledge that the Council provided information and
recommendations concerning educational credentials presented by persons seeking employment or professional licensure in the United States in addition to credentials presented by persons seeking further education.

Over time the membership of the Council changed. In 1978 the seven organizations represented on the Council were AACRAO, American Association of Community and Junior Colleges [AACJC], ACE, College Board, Council of Graduate Schools [CGS], IIE, and NAFSA. There were four observer organizations: Academic Advisory Services of the Office of International Training of the U.S. Agency for International Development [AID], the U.S. International Communication Agency [ICA], CEB of OE, and the University of the State of New York (the New York state department of education) [USNY].

By April 1998, the seven organizations represented on the Council were AACRAO (three members), American Association of Community Colleges [AACC] (one), ACE (one), College Board (one), CGS (one), IIE (one), and NAFSA (three). In addition, one organization was represented as an observer: USNY (one).

In January 2001, the seven organizations represented on the Council were AACRAO (three members), American Association of Community Colleges [AACC] (one), ACE (one), College Board (one), CGS (one), IIE (one), and NAFSA (three). In addition, one organization was represented as an observer: United States Network for Education Information [USNEI] (one).

The AACRAO World Education Series was edited by volunteers until the resignation of Robert Hefling (University of Colorado-Boulder). Bob was replaced by Katherine Donovan, the first paid editor. Katherine had had no previous experience with the Council and she did not know that Council was its abbreviated name. She found it awkward to deal with the full name or its logical acronym: NCEFEC. So she coined a new acronym: CEC. People new to the work of the Council tended to refer to it as CEC. Those who had worked with the Council in the past continued to refer to it as “the Council.”

The Council’s role was to review and formally approve (with or without modifications) the placement recommendations drafted by the authors of publications in AACRAO’s World Education Series and the authors of small monographs intended to supplement publications produced by CEB of OE, both written under the guidance of AACRAO’s Committee on Evaluation of Foreign Student Credentials.

The Office of Student Support Services [OSSS] of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs [CU] of the U.S. Department of State was the primary source of funding for the Council and for the AACRAO World Education Series [WES] publications for which the Council approved placement recommendations.


The Milwaukee Symposium on 19-23 June 1996, organized by the Council, developed a methodology for evaluating foreign educational credentials that was more transparent than the placement recommendations formerly approved by the Council. This methodology was designed to enable foreign educational credential evaluators to examine constituent elements of educational credentials, compare them to U.S. educational benchmarks, and draw their own conclusions.

The Council, which had prepared formal placement recommendations for admission-related publications and workshop reports since 1955, was dissolved in March 2006 when AACRAO and NAFSA withdrew their support.
In 1968, at the insistence of the Office of Student Support Services [OSSS] of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs [CU] of the U.S. Department of State, their primary funding source, NAFSA’s ADSEC and Group II (International Education) of AACRAO began to coordinate their activities pertaining to foreign student admissions and to jointly sponsor new activities through the AACRAO/NAFSA Joint Committee on Workshops [JCOW].

JCOW took over the sponsorship of the series of intensive credential evaluation workshops that NAFSA’s ADSEC had initiated in 1965. JCOW conducted 17 workshops between 1969 and 1993:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Region</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Hawaii III</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Puerto Rico II</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>West Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Scandinavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Hong Kong, Malaysia, Philippines, &amp; Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, &amp; Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>India: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, &amp; Sri Lanka</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Central America</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>1990</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Czech and Slovak Federal Republic</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Poland</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Romania</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From 1965 through 1972, information for the two-week intensive credential evaluation workshops was provided by consultants from the countries being studied and/or by the workshop leaders who had completed a pre-workshop research trip. Beginning in 1973, the participants conducted their own on-site research.

From 1965 through 1989, each workshop involved 22 to 26 participants. Beginning in 1990, only 2 to 6 persons were involved.

From 1965 through 1972, two-day follow-up credential evaluation workshops were held in several regions of the United States to bring to other admissions officers the information produced by the two-week workshops. This activity was co-sponsored by ADSEC, AACRAO Group II, the College Board, and IIE.

The credential evaluation workshops produced many of the leaders of ADSEC and of Group II of AACRAO, and the authors of many of AACRAO’s World Education Series volumes.

In 1989, AACRAO and NAFSA sponsored a symposium in Oregon on Foreign Educational Systems: Future Directions in Research and Information Management. The recommendations of the Oregon Symposium led to the 1990 merger of the AACRAO/NAFSA Joint Committee on Workshops [JCOW] and the AACRAO World Education Series [WES] into a new inter-associational committee: Projects for International Education Research [PIER]. Administrative duties related to PIER, predominantly financial administration, rotated between AACRAO and NAFSA.

In May 2001, AACRAO and NAFSA revised their joint sponsorship of PIER. AACRAO became the financial manager and publisher. NAFSA continued as a co-sponsor of the PIER Committee and assisted in marketing PIER publications. At this time the College Board withdrew from the PIER Committee.

AACRAO and NAFSA announced that they would no longer raise funds for PIER projects, and that the PIER Advisory Committee would not be permitted to raise funds. PIER had to support itself by sales of its publications.
PIER and NAFSA-ADSEC leaders predicted that this financial constraint would lead to the demise of PIER and eventually also the demise of the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials [Council]. Both predictions were accurate.

Milwaukee Council on Foreign Student Affairs

In November 1964, the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs [NAFSA] sent Bill Zimmerman (then at the Chicago office of the Institute of International Education) and a representative from the NAFSA central office to Milwaukee to ask university and college staff members who worked with foreign students to join with their counterparts in Illinois and Michigan to form the new Region V of NAFSA.

The meeting was hosted by Marie Merkel, foreign student advisor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. It was attended by representatives from Carroll College, Marquette University, Milwaukee School of Engineering, Milwaukee Technical College (now Milwaukee Area Technical College), and the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

After agreeing to become members of NAFSA Region V, those in attendance decided to continue meeting as a local Milwaukee activity and they named themselves the Milwaukee Council on Foreign Student Affairs [MCOFSA]. By November 1993 the name had been changed to Milwaukee Council for International Education [MCFIE]. The acronym has since been changed to MCIE.

MCOFSA/MCFIE/MCIE has continued to meet eight times per year, every year since 1964. It is the longest-running local organization of international educators in the United States, and probably in the world.

Membership in MCIE is informal and fluctuating. Every tertiary educational institution in Southeastern Wisconsin has been represented. During the early years there were also representatives of the International Institute and of the Milwaukee office of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Private Foreign Educational Credential Evaluation Services

In July 1969, the U.S. Office of Education [OE] began the process of closing its Foreign Credential Evaluation Service [FCES]. Since then, private services have been established to replace it. These organizations serve persons coming to or residing in the United States who have completed part or all of their education outside of the United States. Applicants are referred to the private services by administrators who need to make an education-related decision and who do not have sufficient knowledge of the educational systems, institutions, and programs of the countries represented in their applicant pool.

Referrals are made by university and college undergraduate and graduate admissions officers; high school counselors; local, state, and federal governmental agencies; state licensing boards for professions ranging from accounting and barbering to veterinary medicine and X-ray technology; professional associations; immigration attorneys; and current and potential employers.

There is no licensing or accreditation process in the United States for foreign educational credential evaluation services. Anyone can engage in this activity, formally or informally.
The continuing need for private credential evaluation services was reflected in an AACRAO report entitled *Toward Century II, Report of AACRAO Task Force 2000* which was presented in March 1998. This report included the following statements:

> International issues are more important as society in general takes on an increasingly broad, global focus. On many campuses, international students are being sought more than ever before. Increased enrollment of international students boosts institutional revenue and provides the kind of diverse, internationally-aware educational experience necessary to prepare successful graduates.

> The growing needs associated with this trend run counter to staffing limitations on many campuses, which leads those institutions to look for outside resources.

Since the mid 1980s, foreign educational credential evaluators and foreign student admissions officers have received less and less assistance from ADSEC and from AACRAO’s Group II.

NAFSA’s last admissions-related publication is a distant memory, as is the ADSEC column in the *NAFSA Newsletter*. There are no topics related to foreign student admissions or foreign educational credential evaluation in NAFSA’s *International Educator* or its electronic newsletter. There are no topics related to admission or credential evaluation in NAFSA’S series of professional development workshops.

In 1990, the AACRAO-NAFSA Joint Committee on Workshops [JCOW] was merged with AACRAO’s World Education Series to form Projects for International Education Research [PIER]. PIER published fewer workshop reports than JCOW and fewer publications than the *World Education Series*. AACRAO and NAFSA disbanded PIER on 16 January 2002.

Since July 1969, the primary sources for published information needed by foreign educational credential evaluators have been three private non-profit foreign educational credential evaluation services: International Education Research Foundation, Inc. [IERF], World Education Services, Inc. [WES], and Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. [ECE].

**International Education Research Foundation, Inc.**

Theodore S. (Ted) Sharp, a retired U.S. Navy Officer who became the Admissions Officer at San Fernando Valley State College (now known as California State University-Northridge), was surprised to discover that there wasn't a reference book that foreign student admissions officers could use to learn about the educational systems of other countries and to refresh their memories when dealing with credentials from a country they had not interacted with for some time.

In 1967, Ted proposed the publication of a one-volume reference, to be called *The Country Index*. Following advice from members of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO] and the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs [NAFSA], Ted asked foreign student admissions officers throughout the United States to assist in writing the publication by contributing individual country sections. Inez Hopkins Sepmeyer (who served the University of California, Los Angeles as a foreign student admissions officer from 1953 to 1977) agreed to be the primary editor.

Because a large number of people were preparing information for *The Country Index*, it seemed inappropriate for any individuals to receive the income it would generate. Therefore in 1969 Ted and Inez established the International Education Research Foundation, Inc. [IERF] as a non-profit organization to receive the income generated by the future sales of *The Country Index*, to be used to fund future publications. Ted was President, Inez Vice President. *The Country Index* was published by Ten Street Press in 1971.
When the U.S. Office of Education [OE] announced in July 1969 that it would terminate its Foreign Credential Evaluation Service [FCES], Ted and Inez established Credential Evaluation Service, a for-profit organization, the first private foreign educational credential evaluation service in the world. A few years later they converted Credential Evaluation Service to non-profit status and merged it with the other services of IERF.

In January 1991, in anticipation of the planned retirement of Inez on 30 June at the age of 80, IERF entered into negotiations with AACRAO to have AACRAO operate IERF as a separate corporation. The negotiations were unsuccessful. Instead, AACRAO established an Office of International Education Services [OIES], its in-house credential evaluation service, in 1993.

IERF continues to publish information about foreign educational systems, including updated editions of *The Country Index*.

**World Education Services, Inc.**

In 1974, Stephen H. Fisher and Josef Silny were foreign student admissions officers at the City University of New York [CUNY].

Steve, a former Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania, had established the Volunteer School for Adults [VSA], a high school-parallel program staffed by volunteers. VSA prepared foreign-educated persons who did not have the equivalent of a U.S. high school diploma to take the General Educational Development [GED] examinations leading to a U.S. high school equivalency diploma so they could qualify for admission to CUNY (at that time a tuition-free open-door institution).

Joe was interested in serving foreign-educated persons who did have the equivalent of a U.S. high school diploma, who did not want to enroll at CUNY, and who encountered problems seeking employment, admission to apprenticeship programs, and other benefits for which a high school diploma was a prerequisite because U.S. decision makers did not understand foreign secondary school credentials.

Steve and Joe decided to establish Educational Equivalence Evaluations, combine it with the Volunteer School for Adults, and form one non-profit organization to be called International Education Services. The State of New York objected to the proposed name because it was too close to Institute of International Education [IIE] and suggested World Education Services instead. World Education Services, Inc. [WES] was incorporated in September 1974. Steve was its President, Joe Vice President.

The main office of WES was originally in Joe’s home in Queens. In 1976, WES received donated space in mid-town Manhattan, within the office of an international consulting company operated by Charles Patterson who was at that time the chair of the WES Board of Directors.

In January 1977, the main office of WES was moved from New York to Catonsville, Maryland, to the home of James S. Frey, the WES Executive Director and first full-time employee. When Jim moved to Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin in November 1977, the main office of WES was moved back to New York, to rented office space in mid-town Manhattan, and Jim worked out of his home in Wisconsin.

In October 1980, Jim and Steve disagreed on how the administrative functions of WES should be conducted. After failing to negotiate a compromise, Jim resigned his position as Executive Director of WES on 4 November 1980, effective 31 December 1980.

WES publishes World Education News and Reviews [WENR]. It provides current information about educational institutions and systems throughout the world.
Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.

James S. Frey was the first full-time employee of World Education Services, Inc. [WES], serving in that position from 1 January 1977 through 31 December 1980. Beginning on 17 January 1977, the WES central office was located in Jim's home in Catonsville, Maryland. In November 1977 the WES central office was moved to New York (mid-town Manhattan). Jim's WES office was in his home in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin from 1 December 1977 through 31 December 1980.

In October 1980, Jim and Stephen H. Fisher, President of WES, disagreed on how the administrative functions of WES should be conducted. After failing to negotiate a compromise, Jim resigned his position as Executive Director of WES on 4 November 1980, effective 31 December 1980.

On 18 November 1980 Jim filed incorporation papers for Educational Credential Evaluators [ECE®]. Incorporation was approved by the Secretary of State of Wisconsin on 19 November 1980.

Four persons formerly associated with WES joined Jim at ECE. Valerie Woolston, formerly WES Vice President, became chair of the ECE® Board of Directors. Ira J. Hamburg, formerly WES Treasurer, became Treasurer of ECE and a member of the ECE® Board of Directors. Josephine Leo Brooks, formerly a WES credential evaluator, became an ECE® Evaluator, an ECE® Vice President, and a member of the ECE® Board of Directors. Lily von Klemperer, formerly a member of the WES Board of Directors, became a Consultant to ECE.

ECE has had two publication series: ECE Presents, and ECE Insights, a three-volume publication, Education in the Commonwealth Caribbean, and other recent publications. ECE published a monthly free electronic newsletter for 12 years, and since 2011 has coordinated a free online forum called The Connection.

Professional Membership Associations for Credential Evaluation Services

Two associations for private credential evaluation organizations and individuals have been established in the U.S. They are the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services, Inc. [NACES] which includes evaluation services, and the Association of International Credential Evaluators, Inc., [AICE] which includes evaluation services and individuals.

National Association of Credential Evaluation Services

National Association of Credential Evaluation Services, Inc. [NACES] is a non-profit membership association of private foreign educational credential evaluation services in the United States. NACES member organizations serve persons coming to or residing in the United States who completed part or all of their education outside of the United States and who are seeking further education, professional licensure, immigration, employment, or other benefits for which prior educational qualifications are required.

On 16 December 1977, David R. Reyes-Guerra, Chairman of the Engineers' Council for Professional Development (a member of the Council of Specialized Accrediting Agencies) wrote to Ernest L. Boyer, U.S. Commissioner of Education (Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare). Mr Reyes-Guerra referred to the fact that the Office of Education [OE] no longer provided advisory interpretation of foreign educational credentials and instead published a list of private organizations that provide such a service.
Mr. Reyes-Guerra stated that “equivalency interpretations” provided by private organizations “have a place in education but not necessarily in employment situations” because the private organizations were not staffed by “individuals with expertise in most of the professions for which they are providing credential interpretation.” He added that “such an interpretation is seldom acceptable for employment or licensure purposes.”

Mr. Reyes-Guerra suggested that “criteria be established for qualifications of the agencies to be listed by” OE, and that “such qualifications have to include among others:

1) proof on the part of the agency that any interpretation of professional credentials has been done by knowledgeable professionals in that field;
2) that the interpretation is primarily given to meet educational and not employment or licensure requirements;
3) that the interpretation is only advisory in nature and carries no official endorsement connotations; and
4) that the agency must clearly state in its letter of interpretation the limitations of their interpretation.”

Mr. Reyes-Guerra stated that “the Board of Directors of the Council of Specialized Accrediting Agencies discussed the above situation at their meeting of November 29, 1977 and endorsed my writing to you with the above concerns. We firmly believe that the Office of Education should not publish any reference lists of private organizations in cases as important as credential interpretation of professional curricula unless such organizations meet definite criteria covering the validity of the work performed by the agencies involved.” [Letter from David R. Reyes-Guerra to Ernest L. Boyer, December 16, 1977.]

On 1 March 1978, following up on the letter of response he had received from Dr. Boyer, Mr. Reyes-Guerra stated “I would agree with your letter entirely if the term “evaluation” was not used by these agencies or if their performance was carried out in the terms you outline. The term “evaluation” to most of us assumes an official judgment as to the value of the credential. It implies among other things a well defined criteria and personnel knowledgeable of the particular discipline. Your words “advisory interpretation” or the simple word “interpretation” would truly reflect the work of such agencies and could not be considered as possibly being deceptive. An evaluator in higher education is considered to be a person with professional credentials in the field which that person evaluates. This is not so in the case of an interpreter.” [Letter from David R. Reyes-Guerra to Ernest L. Boyer, March 1, 1978.]

Dr. Boyer responded that the Office of Education’s list of evaluation agencies “is informational and in no way endorses, recognizes, or approves their activities or views. The very process of evaluating or interpreting educational credentials involves the making of value judgments, and in credential evaluation (or interpretation) judgments may vary. In our view, the term “evaluation” does not carry any connotation of an official judgment, governmental or non-governmental, binding any other institution, agency, or organization under our decentralized system of education.” [Letter from Ernest L. Boyer to David R. Reyes-Guerra, March 31, 1978.]

Dr. Boyer suggested that Mr. Reyes-Guerra discuss his concerns with the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials because evaluation agencies generally follow the evaluation recommendations of the National Council.

Mr. Reyes-Guerra sent a copy of each of his letters to Kenneth Young, President of the Commission on Postsecondary Accreditation [COPA]. Mr. Young sent a copy of the first letter to Sanford C. Jameson, Chair of the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials, who added it to the agenda for the next meeting of the Council. Mr. Jameson also sent the letter to staff members of each of the four private foreign educational credential evaluation services that were included in Sources of Foreign Credential Interpretation Assistance, the OE list to which Mr. Reyes-Guerra had referred: Education International (Joel Slocum), International
Consultants, Inc. of Delaware (Gary Hopkins), International Education Research Foundation (Ted Sharp), and World Education Services (James Frey).

Charles C. Hauch, Chief of the Comparative Education Section [CES] of the Bureau of Postsecondary Education of the Office of Education, represented OE on the Council. Dr. Hauch believed that regulation of private foreign educational credential evaluation services would not be an appropriate OE activity. He recommended that the private services develop and agree to standards that could be used to assure the public that evaluation reports prepared by staff members of the private services were prepared by qualified evaluators adhering to professional standards. He suggested that they should do so as soon as possible.

Theodore S. Sharp, then President of International Education Research Foundation [IERF], Stephen H. Fisher, then President of World Education Services, Inc. [WES], and James S. Frey, then Executive Director of WES, drafted standards for membership for an organization to be called National Association of Credential Evaluation Services [NACES]. The drafts were circulated among the nine private evaluation services then in existence, and they were revised many times. In 1984, when the drafts were acceptable to each of the nine services, each one contributed money to pay for the development of the membership organization.

A five-person NACES task force was assembled. Each of the five persons was a national leader in foreign student admissions and was active in the leadership of the two professional organizations relevant to this field: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO] and National Association for Foreign Student Affairs [NAFSA]. Each task force member was not personally involved with any of the nine private services. The task force members were:

- Eugene Chamberlain (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
- Karlene N. Dickey (Stanford University)
- Rebecca R. Dixon (College Board Midwest Office)
- G. James Haas (Indiana University-Bloomington)
- Cassandra A. Pyle (Institute of International Education)

The members of the NACES task force revised the proposed standards for membership. When the revisions had been approved by each of the nine private services, the members of the task force required each service to formally apply for admission to membership in NACES, including the submission of sample credential evaluation reports. The members of the task force then applied to each service the requirements for membership specified in the standards.

In April 1985, the members of the task force determined that six of the nine services met NACES membership qualifications; two would be eligible if they made specific changes; and one was not eligible.

The eight organizations deemed eligible to be members of NACES met at the AACRAO annual conference in Cincinnati in April 1985 and elected officers. On 30 May 1985 an organizational meeting was held at the NAFSA annual conference in Baltimore, and work was begun on the development of a certificate of incorporation and bylaws, and the hiring of an attorney to handle the incorporation process. NACES was incorporated in Delaware in March 1987. At that time the eight organizations became the charter members:

- Center for Applied Research, Evaluation & Education, Inc.
- Education International, Inc.
- Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.
- Foreign Academic Credentials Service, Inc.
- Foundation for International Services, Inc.
- International Consultants of Delaware, Inc.
- International Education Research Foundation, Inc.
- World Education Services, Inc.
Following incorporation, the NACES Membership Committee took over the responsibilities that had been carried out initially by the NACES Task Force. Since incorporation in 1987, NACES has admitted to membership the following private evaluation services:

A2Z Evaluations, LLC (2009)  
Academic Evaluation Services, Inc. (2008)  
Educational Perspectives, nfp (2003)  
e-ValReports (2007)  
Foreign Educational Document Service (1994)  
International Academic Credential Evaluators, Inc. (2006)  
SpanTran Educational Services, Inc. (1996)  
Transcript Research (2011)

The NACES certificate of incorporation and bylaws were revised and again approved by the State of Delaware in April 1994.

To qualify for membership in NACES, a private foreign educational credential evaluation service must meet the following requirements:

1. It must be private and independent. It cannot be a branch, division, or subsidiary of any other organization.

2. The senior evaluation staff members (that is, the persons responsible for credential evaluation policy and for determining equivalents to U.S. educational credentials) must have had a minimum of five years of full-time experience (or the part-time equivalent) as a foreign educational credential evaluator at a regionally-accredited university or college in the United States or at a NACES member organization.

3. The senior evaluation staff members must have shared their research results with other persons in this field through conference presentations, professional workshops, and/or publications, so that the quality of their work could be judged by their peers.

4. The senior evaluation staff members must demonstrate their knowledge of foreign educational systems by preparing evaluation reports based upon sets of educational credentials given to them by the NACES Membership Committee.

5. The applicant organization must submit for review by the NACES Membership Committee information concerning its organizational structure; its owners, officers, and/or directors; its reference library; and various aspects of its service to customers, including application materials, fees, and procedures for handling follow-up requests and complaints.

NACES membership pertains to foreign educational credential evaluations only. It does not pertain to any other services that a NACES member organization might provide, such as translations or evaluation of work experience.

Each NACES member organization is autonomous. NACES sets minimum professional standards for this field. It does not dictate evaluation conclusions.
Association of International Credential Evaluators, Inc.

The Association of International Credential Evaluators, Inc. [AICE], a not-for-profit organization, was incorporated in 1998 in Nevada. Membership is open to independent foreign educational credential evaluation organizations and to individuals.

The officers and board members of AICE in 2012 were:

Chair           Jasmin Saidi Kuehnert, MBA
President       David A. Robinson, Ph.D.
Vice President  George Fletcher, Ed.D.
Secretary       Jasmin Saidi Kuehnert, MBA
Treasurer       Mario Caruso, M.A.

The members of AICE in 2012 were:

Academic Credentials Evaluation Institute, Inc.
American Education Research Corporation
Foreign Credential Evaluations, Inc.
Globe Language Services, Inc.
International Evaluation Services
Lisano International
SDR Educational Consultants

Pioneers in International Education Research

In 2002, a group of current and former members of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO] and NAFSA: Association of International Educators [NAFSA] decided to honor the pioneers in the profession of foreign educational credential evaluation. A Pioneer Fund was established to receive donations honoring the memory of the pioneers. ECE volunteered to administer the fund. Three long-time members of the profession agreed to serve as a steering committee: Rebecca R. Dixon (chair), Christine Kerlin, and Leo Sweeney.

Between May 2003 and October 2009, thirty donors contributed a total of $5,720. An additional $180 was earned as interest.

The Steering Committee solicited proposals for research projects. Two travel grants were awarded in 2010, and two research projects were funded. In 2010 and 2012, respectively, Kathleen Trayte Freeman’s book on the educational system of Morocco and Emily Tse’s book titled Approaches to International Degree Recognition: A Comparative Study were published electronically by ECE [http://www.ece.org/pioneerfund]. The Pioneer Fund was dissolved by the Steering Committee in 2010.