

ASPANA News - July 2001

Issue Theme: "Adding Value Through Effective Governance"

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Saying Hello - Looking to the Future

By Betty J. Horton, chair, ASPANA Board of Directors; Director of Education & Accreditation, COA-NA: Nurse Anesthesia

July 1, 2001 marked my first day as Chair of ASPANA. I begin my term with optimism for the future of our organization and appreciation for the opportunity to serve the members. I also

extend my appreciation to David Werner, Chancellor at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, for providing excellent leadership of ASPA for the past three years. David truly sees the role accreditation plays in improving educational quality. He is a non-accreditor who recognizes the value of specialized accreditation and its pioneering efforts to use outcomes as indicators of student learning. The strong foundation laid by David and the previous Chairs of ASPA serves to make my job easier.

I am looking forward to working with the Board of Directors, Executive Director and members in continued efforts to promote the quality and integrity of specialized and professional accreditation of post-secondary programs and institutions. The Board will focus on this goal by inviting ASPA's committees and task force chairs to meet with the board on Sunday morning, September 9, 2001 prior to ASPA's Fall Meeting in Paradise Valley, Arizona.

This planning session will provide a forum for exchange of information between the Board and your committee and task force leaders. The Board is seeking feedback on previous activities and ideas for new initiatives. As part of the process, we will review the objectives of ASPA as outlined in the Bylaws, confirm short-range goals for the year and consider some longer-range plans. An important outcome of our discussions will be to provide guidance and support for committees as they fulfill their tasks.

Finally, I want to commend ASPA members who generously share information with each other. The willingness of each of you to share copies of policies and procedures, explain how to do things more effectively and give advice on a myriad of topics is extraordinary. In addition to strengthening our formal organization, this informal system of communication also strengthens specialized accreditation in general by fostering and passing on knowledge of good accreditation practices. This culture of information sharing ensures that knowledge is handed down from one generation of ASPA members to the next. I applaud you. I encourage you to keep up the good work!

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Saying Good-by - with a Challenge

By David J. Werner, immediate past-chair, ASPA Board of Directors; Chancellor, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

How quickly time goes by. More than three years have passed since the Nominating Committee called asking that I consider being nominated to chair the ASPA Board. I accepted with some considerable trepidation-for at least two reasons. First, I knew full well the excellent leadership ASPA had enjoyed since its inception, and I saw big shoes to fill. Second, I wasn't sure I knew enough about accreditation and ASPA to serve its members well.

Looking back, I'm very glad I accepted the nomination. Having been a Board member prior to being chair, I had already gained a real appreciation for ASPA, its members, and the individuals who represent the member agencies. My appreciation and respect have only grown over the last

three years. I have seen higher education from many perspectives over the years, but I have never meet individuals more dedicated to enhancing quality than those representing ASPA agencies. Topping that off was the opportunity to work with Cynthia Davenport, an excellent representative and spokesperson for specialized accreditation.

I had two goals when I became chair: first, to increase the membership to include the broad range of specialized and professional accreditors; second, to improve the communication between accreditors and presidents and provosts. We made progress on the first goal. Membership is up, strengthening ASPA as the voice for specialized accreditors, and also improving ASPA's financial standing.

We made some progress on the second goal, but not as much as I had hoped. I still believe accreditors must be pro-active in seeking out presidents or provosts to serve as members of their decision-making bodies. Involvement and familiarity are most likely to cause old attitudes to change. As I end my time as ASPA's chair, I again challenge every ASPA-member to consider how best to involve high-level institutional representatives in your process. And, I thank you for letting me be an active part of the ASPA family.

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Make Your Plans Now...

Editor

ASPA's Fall 2001 meeting "Adding Value Through Effective Governance," will be held Sunday - Tuesday, September 9-11 at Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain, Paradise Valley, AZ (between Scottsdale and Phoenix). The hotel and meeting room space are now re-opened. The spa and tennis areas will be completed later this fall.

The ASPA block includes rooms at the pre-opening rates of \$140/night (deluxe casitas) and \$175/night (casita suites). If the hotel has rooms available, these rates will apply before and after the meeting dates. Information about this exciting property is available at: www.sanctuaryoncamelback.com. Program schedules and meeting registration forms are included with this mailing or may be obtained from the ASPA office.

Plan to book your room at the hotel before the August 10 deadline. To be eligible for the early bird member discount, be sure your registration is postmarked by August 3, 2001.

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Are Universities "Overrun" by Accreditors?

Editor

CHEA, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, will publish a paper by David J. Werner describing the results of the study he conducted for ASPA of the actual number of site visits

conducted to major institutions over a four-year period. The paper, “Are Universities ‘Overrun’ by Accreditors? A Look at the Data,” does just that. It looks at data for the 115 institutions with the highest number of site visits, i.e., ten or more visits during the four studied.

Werner’s data is consistent with data collected for the 2001 edition of the *Higher Education Directory*. HED data indicate that 1,478 of the 4,083 institutions in the nation (36%) have only a single institutional accreditation. Of the 2,605 with multiple accreditations, 842 (20%) have just two (one institutional and one programmatic). Since 36% of higher education institutions have only institutional (regional or national) accreditation and another 32% have only one or two specialized accreditations, Werner limited the focus of his report to the experiences of a small group of 115 complex universities with highly diverse curricular offerings. The 115 institutions (2.8%) having 10 or more site visits over the four-year period studied had an annual average of 3.8 visits per year.

Watch for Werner’s report and his views of the leadership required of both institutions and accreditors in the Fall 2001 issue of the *CHEA Chronicle*.

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CRAC Appoints Liaison to ASPA

Editor

The Council on Regional Accrediting Commissions has appointed Jean Avnet Morse, Executive Director, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools as their liaison to ASPA. ASPA and Middle States have a history of working together that extends back to 1997 when a task force of regional and specialized accreditors developed “Collaborative Evaluations by Regional and Specialized Accrediting Agencies: Guidelines and Procedures.” The resource document is meant to stimulate consideration of the potential benefits of truly collaborative visits. It suggests topics to discuss before committing to such a joint venture.

ASPA says “thank you” to CRAC for appointing a liaison and “welcome” to Dr. Morse. We look forward to working with you in this new role.

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The Reform of Accreditation: NASPAA’s Approach

By Laurel McFarland, Academic Director, NASPAA: Public Affairs and Administration

As the new Academic Director at NASPAA (the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration), I initiated a thorough review of our entire accreditation operation. I identified eleven topics that needed attention, and the President of NASPAA named a strategy committee to consider one topic each month over the course of a year. We are now more than halfway through the process. I launch each month’s discussion with a memo circulated in advance.

To illustrate the process we have been going through, here are the eleven topics NASPAA is studying.

1. **Scope of Accrediting Activity** - Is our present breadth and depth of accreditation coverage appropriate for quality assurance in this field?
2. **Independence of the Commission on Accreditation (COPRA) from the Membership Association (NASPAA)** - What should the governance relationship be between COPRA and NASPAA?
3. **Site Team** - Does COPRA have a transparent, rational, defensible system of site team visitor selection?
4. **Outcomes Measures** - Should COPRA emphasize outcomes more in judging quality of masters programs?
5. **Public Accountability** - Should COPRA provide more information about the accreditation process and outcomes to students/public/peer institutions?
6. **Data Issues** - Are all data collected actually needed in the review process?
7. **Process** - Is COPRA doing everything it can to avoid excess red tape, bureaucracy, and excess paperwork for participants?
8. **Cost of Accreditation** - Is NASPAA charging the right amount for accreditation-does it reflect the true economic cost to NASPAA of doing it? Should it be subsidized by the membership association as a “public good”?
9. **Training and Development** - How can the performance of the participants in the accreditation process be continuously improved?
10. **Distance Learning** - Are any policy changes needed with regard to the prospect of accrediting stand-alone distance learning MPA programs?
11. **Future of Accreditation** - What should accreditation/quality assurance in public affairs look like in 5 years? 10 years?

To further illustrate the process we have been going through at NASPAA, here is an excerpt from Memo No. 7 on “Process”.

Accreditation Strategy Memo No. 7: PROCESS

“Paperless accreditation”: *How far should we go toward being paperless? Is paper still essential at any particular point in the process, or does it simply have attributes that could also be accomplished electronically? How far should we take “e-accreditation”?*

When I first arrived at NASPAA (the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration), virtually all of the workflow of accreditation was on paper. Hundreds of copies of self studies came in, were sorted, boxed, mailed out, stored, transported to meeting sites, and then stuffed down in the basement in largely inaccessible storage boxes. Site visit reports were mailed in to NASPAA, mailed out to principal reps, mailed back to NASPAA, re-mailed to site team chairs, mailed back to NASPAA, then mailed to Commission on Accreditation (COPRA) members. Annual reports were mailed in, then photocopied and mailed out to COPRA members.

However, as cumbersome as our process has been, most of the practices and paper flow arose for logical and important reasons. The paper system had a number of important qualities that may be desirable to retain in an electronic system. Some of these attributes include:

1. Feeling of association among member institutions and sense of support of accreditation from all NASPAA members.
2. "Official": The fact that self studies had to be bound and mailed, and that accreditation correspondence came in "official" envelopes, etc. often ensured more careful preparation of materials and added gravitas to the proceedings. E-transmissions can be less edited and polished, and can seem less "serious."
3. Regulation of work flow: the NASPAA paper trail controlled "who saw what when."
4. Integrity: With NASPAA as the gatekeeper to receive, duplicate, and mail out documents, a respected entity served as the intermediary. It was seen by schools as an impartial director of the accreditation process, without bias or prejudice toward individual institutions.
5. Enforcer: NASPAA served as a visible agent in enforcing deadlines and following up when participants fail to complete tasks on time.
6. Due process: the paper process set up a clear set of submission rules and a linear path for information flow that protected all parties and delineated a clear sequence of steps.

In the last year, we have moved significantly toward electronic transmission. Site visitor selection is done via electronic mail. Site visit reports are now transmitted electronically. Annual reports are now filed and distributed via e-mail. The electronic submission of self studies will be the last hurdle in the move to "paperless accreditation," and it presents some difficult issues for us. There seems to be a "Law of E-Accreditation:" whatever e-transmission rule makes it easier for COPRA, makes it harder for the schools, and whatever makes it easier for the schools makes it harder for COPRA. Furthermore, going "halfway there" is particularly problematic: it is expensive and confusing to run parallel processes for e-submissions and paper submissions. A dual system is probably more error-prone and more time consuming than a solely paper-based system. In the short term, we can certainly handle multiple modes of transmission and delivery. But in the medium term, we need one protocol that everyone can live with. (In the long term, we will need to prepare for the possibility that accreditation will have to change radically to deal with distance learning and new modes of public affairs education.)

But the real question for the committee is how much further toward the e-frontier NASPAA should travel, and why. Accomplishing the electronic transmission of accreditation material is only the first step of e-accreditation possibilities. Once we have accomplished that, we have to decide how much further to explore. We have been exploring the possibility of web-based accreditation, in which schools input information directly into database fields on our website. (NCATE and some of our fellow accrediting bodies have made great strides in this area.) A web-based approach, for example, would make the storage and extraction of accreditation information for summary data and analysis extremely easy. It would also facilitate continuous monitoring of the school over the seven year cycle. Right now COPRA suffers from a lack of

continuity and follow-up of individual schools over time. Issues are identified during accreditation, but not followed up in annual report reviews because no sustained record is kept of the issues, and different liaison members read different institutions each year. If COPRA members could enter information directly into a web-accessed database concerning a school's issues as they assess the school's annual report, then issues could be tagged and followed up for the next 7 years, even as COPRA members come and go on the Commission.

It has also been suggested that the very nature of COPRA's work could be changed via e-accreditation technology. The internet could be used to create "virtual communities of quality assurance" where COPRA members could meet virtually and work jointly and in real time on web-based documents. There is potential for cost savings (if face to face meetings are reduced in number), enhanced collaboration in decision-making, and greater communication (and transparency) with schools.

Clearly, one of the most important issues for the strategy committee to consider is the financial and time investment required vs. the benefits that additional levels of e-accreditation offer. Right now, our paper-based system makes it almost impossible to do any collective analysis of the accreditation information and data supplied. Accreditation data could enhance our understanding of the field of Public Affairs education, but extracting such information would require either additional manpower or additional technology. Similarly, the paper-based system, combined with the turnover of COPRA members, means that continuous quality assurance over the seven year cycle is nearly impossible without the application of resources and technology.

Discussion Question: Should COPRA become more electronic? E-accreditation offers reduced time devoted to processing paper, more time for substance, new possibilities for continuous quality improvement, speedier transmission of accreditation information, better data extraction and analysis of the PA field, increased collaboration among accreditation participants, greater continuity across COPRA years, and so on. But it offers it at a significant price—both for NASPAA (financially) and for the participants in the process who may not be ready or interested in adopting the required technology.

Laurel's Concluding Comments: Although NASPAA's process for acting on the discussions is not "set in cement," we had a midpoint review to look at every recommendation discussed during the first six conference calls. We collected them into a set of recommendations to our standard-setting body and will do the same after we finish the second half of the discussion sessions. The standards body will consider the recommendations at their annual meeting in October. Some of the recommendations, of course, will not impact the standards, but rather are changes in tools or practices. That's the kind of thing that's been keeping NASPAA staff busy during the past few months.

This process, and particularly my work on topic 7, causes me to wonder whether accreditors could somehow work together to move toward a paperless process that would be too costly to create alone. Perhaps ASPA could play a convening role to help us discuss this possibility.

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ASPA Leaders Elected

Editor

Congratulations to the following people who were elected at ASPA's Spring 2001 meeting. New terms began on July 1:

Barbara Brown Robinson, an independent counseling consultant and practitioner member of the ASPA Board of Directors was re-elected to the board and elected vice-chair of ASPA. Accreditor board member, **Olive M. Kimball**, NAACLS: Clinical Laboratory Sciences, was elected as Treasurer for a 3rd one-year term. Special thanks to **David Werner** as he turns the chair's gavel over to **Betty Horton**-*see separate items*. It has been a pleasure to work with David and I am confident that Betty will represent ASPA equally well during her tenure as chair. Betty and David have been working together to achieve a seamless transition for ASPA.

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ASPA Committee Chairs Elected

Editor

Congratulations also to the following individuals who were elected chair of an ASPA standing committee. New terms began on July 1:

- **Membership: Dort Bigg**, ACAOM: Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine, was re-elected as committee member and chair.
- **Nominations: Alvin E. Rudisill**, NAIT: Industrial Technology, and **Carol L. Bobby**, CACREP: Counseling were elected to the committee, along with Beverly E. Mitchell who subsequently resigned. Special thanks to **Joyce S. Crouse**, AAFCS: Family and Consumer Science, who received the next highest number of votes and accepted an appointment to the committee.
- **Professional Development - Spring: Ann O'Neill**, ALA: Library & Information Studies, was re-elected as member and sub-committee co-chair; **Jennifer Butlin**, CCNE: Nursing, was elected as a member of the Spring sub-committee.
- **Professional Development - Fall: Ron Leighton**, ASLA: Landscape Architecture, and **Jeanne Donovan**, ABHES: Health Education Schools, were elected to the Fall sub-committee. Jeanne informed ASPA that she has accepted a job outside of accreditation. **Jenny Gunderman**, CACREP: Counseling, has accepted a one-year appointment to the committee. Congratulations on your career change, Jeanne, and thanks, Jenny, for stepping up to the plate for ASPA!

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Consensus is Key to Effective Accreditation Standards

Editor

ASPA Executive Director, Cynthia Davenport's chapter, *How Frequently Should Accreditation Standards Change?*, was included in the Jossey-Bass Sourcebook "How Accreditation Influences Assessment." This sourcebook, Number 113 in the New Directions for Higher Education series, was published in late Spring 2001.

Davenport based her chapter on data gathered by survey and an analysis of the practices and policies of specialized accreditors. She writes: "Standards are consensus documents. Standards can be effective only if they emerge from the collective wisdom of the broad-based constituencies affected by the accreditation process."

Contact Jossey-Bass at 888/ 378-2537 to purchase the sourcebook which also contains a chapter written by Frank Murray, TEAC: Teacher Education. All those attending the Spring 2001 ASPA meeting received a pre-publication copy of Davenport's chapter in their meeting notebooks.

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A New Name and Another Job

Editor

ASPA's Task Force on Department of Education Issues has a new name. It is now the **Task Force on Recognition Issues**. Following the Spring 2001 meeting, the task force was re-named and given the expanded job of monitoring recognition issues and the processes conducted by the US Department of Education and CHEA.

Although ASPA does not plan to implement the recognition function referenced in the bylaws, the task force will consider whether ASPA should have some other role in recognition. Two 1995 ASPA documents, "*Vision Statement, Values, and Values and Philosophy for Accrediting Bodies*" and "*Code of Good Practice for a National Oversight Organization*," will serve as resources as the task force pursues this part of its charge.

Task force chair, **Karen Hart**, ADA: Dentistry, says the task force will be creating a "snappy brochure" that explains the benefits of specialized accreditation. This "leave-behind" item will help your government affairs staff talk to members of congress and their staff about accreditation during reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, due to begin in just a few years.

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A Winning "Profile"...

Editor

The first edition of the ASPA *Accreditation Profile Compendium* is getting rave reviews. ASPA compiled basic information that gives a useful overview or "profile" of 5 regional, 6 national and 43 specialized/professional accrediting bodies. All participants received their *Compendium* in

early April 2001. The notebook format was chosen to make it easy to add new profiles as they are received.

If you did not submit a profile for your accrediting body because the project hit your desk at an inconvenient time, it's not too late. Contact the ASPA Office for the electronic data submission form. You will receive a free copy of the Compendium when you submit your profile. ASPA plans to distribute all new profiles to those who already have the document.

If you want a set of the profiles but are not an accreditor, contact the ASPA office to purchase a copy. "The notebook's a gold mine," say some who've been using the *Compendium*. Please send your feedback and suggestions to ASPA for use when the profiles are updated for a future edition of the *Compendium*.

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"Building Effective Governing Boards"

Editor

Nancy Axelrod, principal, NonProfit Leadership Services, has been working with members of the fall professional development sub-committee to develop a program you won't want to miss. Monday afternoon will begin with an overview of best practices in the non-profit sector and then turn to governance issues of most concern to accreditors. Tuesday morning will explore conflict, controversy and working effectively with important constituents. The program is designed to build on the spring session. See enclosed flyer for more details.

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"Planning How to do What We [Accreditors] do Better"

Editor

Focus on quality and self-improvement was evident at the Spring 2001 ASPA meeting. The theme of the meeting, "Adding Value Through Good Planning," was reflected in the professional development session on effective planning for accreditors. Mike Hamm of Michael S. Hamm & Associates, a consultant in strategic planning, assessment and improvement, presented "Tips for Continuous Improvement," followed by discussion of national and international good planning practices.

The discussion became very practical after lunch as a panel discussed "Bringing Home Good Planning Practices." **Peter Vlases**, ACPE: Pharmacy; **Joanne Greathouse**, JRCERT: Radiologic Technology; **Karen Hart**, ADA-CDA: Dentistry; **Carol Moneymaker**, ABHES: Health Education Schools; and **Paul Walker**, CCE: Chiropractic, set the stage for a rapid fire facilitated discussion of good planning.

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Draft CHEA Statement Discussed at Conference

Editor

Cynthia Davenport, ASPA executive director, represented ASPA as member of a panel to discuss CHEA's draft *Statement on Good Practices and Shared Responsibilities in the Creation of Specialized Accreditation Standards*. The panel was moderated by David Shulenburg, provost, University of Kansas, and included Susanne Shaw, executive director, ACEJMC: Journalism.

Comments received from CHEA-participating accreditors and organizations were available at the conference. CHEA president, Judith Eaton, said that she hopes to present the statement to the CHEA board in late September 2001.

Many of your accreditation colleagues were panel members at this "Enhancing Usefulness" conference which CHEA holds annually in late June.

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