



COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION

For Recreation, Park Resources
and Leisure Services

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Memorandum

To: Chairs of Accredited Recreation, Park Resources, and Leisure Services Programs

Date: July 2008

From: Marcia Jean Carter, Re.D., CPRP, CTRS, Chair Council on Accreditation

RE: Information Update

Over the last year, the Council on Accreditation, with your input has undergone major updates in all of its operating documents as the transition to outcome-oriented accreditation approaches. We encourage you to contact us with any questions and hope this update is helpful in your planning processes – we have included the Council roster to assist you in making contact with us.

Council Members

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Cheryl Stevens, East Carolina University, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, to the Council serving in one of the educator positions. The Council will soon be asking for nominations for two positions, a public representative and a practicing professional, to be elected by the Council during the Baltimore meeting. Revisions in the operating documents of the Council including the By-Laws will result in adjustments to Council membership. There are 10 members on the Council that include one college/university administrator, one public representative, five educators, and three practitioners. Henceforth, two at-large educators shall be nominated by accredited programs and elected by the Council with three educators and three practitioners nominated by NRPA members and elected by the Council.

CHEA Update

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is the recognition body of accrediting bodies. Recognition of COA accreditation is awarded by CHEA for a period of 10 years. Our interim report was recently submitted. The preliminary response from CHEA raised questions on our reliance for financial support from one sponsoring body – NRPA. Our effort to create opportunities for specialty professions to affiliate with the COA is one avenue under consideration to address this concern. The increase in fees and adjustments in the internal operations also are intended to respond to this concern. The Council also received information from CHEA's Judith Wilde, Vice President for Recognition Services, on several accreditation topics including: the status of the federal move to outcome measures, potential fee adjustments, strategies to consider as the move to outcome standards occurs, items to consider in the assessment process (e.g. portfolios, the internship experience, site-specific entry-exit tests), and the importance of training and retraining professionals and academic program representatives as the transition is made to outcome-based accreditation.

Visitors and Training

Your assistance is needed in recruiting visitors from academic and professional fields. To serve as a visitor, training within the last five years under the current standards is required; and with the new standards, all visitors will be trained on the Outcome Standards and Assessment. Training is available during the NRPA Congress and may also be arranged at state conferences or on campus when sufficient interest is demonstrated. At the 2008 NRPA Congress in Baltimore, training will occur Tuesday, October 14th from 12:45 – 4:45 p.m. A general orientation will be followed by specialized trainings for persons with an interest in serving as visitation team chairs, persons who are new to the academic accreditation process, and those who are updating their skills. All attendees of this training will hear an update on the status of the revised COA accreditation standards.

Operation Documents Updated

During the April 2008 meeting, the Council reviewed a number of revised documents. Nearing completion are Evaluation Forms to use during the visitation process and a Handbook that consolidates all previous procedural documents into one. The second round of input on the standards was also considered with subsequent changes accepted by the Council. The COA Standards presently found on the NRPA website are the result of deliberations and will undergo pilot testing during 2008-2009. Also found on the website is a document titled Policy on Association Affiliation, which outlines how specialty professions can be served by and work with the COA.

Standards Update

The Council accepted a version of Outcomes Standards and Assessment following the April meeting. The present version is to undergo pilot testing commencing this fall through 2009, to be followed by pilot training with schools and visitors (2009-2010). The Council recognizes that ‘editorial’ changes might result following these testing situations. Input and thoughts shared by our stakeholders are greatly appreciated with many reflected in the new document. Schools whose accreditation cycle occurs in 2011 and 2012 have the option of review under the 2004 standards or the outcomes standards and assessment. All schools will be evaluated under the outcomes standards and assessment commencing in 2013.

The outcomes standards and assessment are organized as follows:

- 1.0 Eligibility Criteria
- 2.0 Mission, Vision, Values, and Planning
- 3.0 Administration
- 4.0 Faculty
- 5.0 Students
- 6.0 Instructional Resources
- 7.0 Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes are organized into three areas: foundations, provision of services and experiences for the public, guests, visitors, and clients, and management and administration. In addition, programs are to have institutionally approved degree

requirements, maintain an up-to-date assessment plan and offer a comprehensive internship.

Each standard in the plan is presented with ‘suggested evidence of compliance’ statements to guide response. The Council also anticipates developing a model self-study with evaluation metrics during the pilot testing period. Currently the second part of the document presents an orientation to outcome assessment that includes sample metrics. As you might have read in the FAQ, there are no longer option standards. To better address the growth of specialty professions related to recreation, park resources, leisure experiences, human service industries, the design of professional specialty outcome standards is being left to associations who elect to affiliate and design criteria relevant to their practice(s). These standards would become the 8.0 series. When associations present standards, they will be approved by the Council with representation given to the association to participate as an ‘Ad Hoc’ member during deliberations on the 1.0-7.0 series standards with full voting powers during Council consideration of programs seeking specialty profession accreditation (8.0 series criteria). Please see the Policy on Association Affiliation for details. We encourage your communication and seek your assistance as efforts are made to seek-out related specialty groups who might benefit from being associated with a CHEA approved accreditation process.

Program Update

Congratulations and welcome to the following programs that completed their reviews during the April 2008 meeting:

- California University of Pennsylvania, initial accreditation
- Georgia Southern University, 25-year review
- University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse, 20-year review
- Kansas State University, 20-year review

Thank you to all for your assistance during the standards revision process. The latest version of the standards is available on the NRPA website. If you have specific questions, please feel free to contact Council members directly (roster attached) or the Accreditation Manager, Jimmy O’Connor, at 703-858-2150 or joconnor@nrpa.org.