



Memorandum

To: Accredited Programs

From: Marcia Carter *Marcia Jean Carter*
Chair, Council on Accreditation for Recreation, Park Resources and Leisure Services

Re: Spring 2009 COA Memo

Date: June 12, 2009

Happy Graduation! The COA held its spring meeting at Ashburn, Virginia, March 30 through April 1, 2009. The Council welcomed and selected new members, conducted reviews with seven programs, met with RCRA, and deliberated on operational plans and strategies associated with the 2013 learning outcomes. Several activities are ongoing and with this brief newsletter, Council actions and activities will be summarized.

1. New Council members joining COA were E. Jay Ellington of Prince William County Park Authority in Virginia, a professional Council representative, and William "Rick" Harwell of Anchorage Alaska, the new Public Council representative. Selected to the Council in Educator roles were Drs. Ed Udd and Jeff Witman who will join the Council following the October, 2009 meeting. The membership is comprised of 10 individuals: five educators from accredited programs, three professionals, one university level administrator, and one public representative.
2. Seven program reviews were conducted with programs receiving continuing accreditation. These included: Temple, Radford, Utah, Idaho, Texas State at San Marcos, Indiana, and Southeast Missouri. Congratulations to these programs.
3. Resort and Commercial Recreation Association (RCRA) represented by Bruce Boliver signed a draft agreement form with the Council, to develop learning outcomes and standards for this specialty profession. The tentative timeline is to have the criteria in place for use commencing in 2013. The Council and RCRA agreed in principle to the creation of a Specialty Accreditation Committee (SAC) by RCRA to guide the development and oversee the standards and learning outcomes (chair of the SAC will serve as the representative to COA). The Council is presently in the process of updating its handbook to reflect the affiliate policies and procedures.
4. Several policies and procedures were re-evaluated with immediate changes made to streamline Council protocols and reduce costs for programs to complete the accreditation process. One adjustment allows a program under continuing accreditation (at Council discretion), to participate in the hearing via teleconference rather than in-person. The visit chair is to attend the Council hearing (the Chair may request and receive Council approval to also participate via teleconference). Henceforth, completed Self Studies must be received by the visitation team, Council, and staff at least eight weeks prior to the scheduled visit. By four weeks prior to the actual visit the program will receive word from the Council to proceed (or not to proceed) to schedule the visit. You probably have noticed the creation of an accreditation listserv as assistance in updating information pertaining to your respective programs has already been solicited. We encourage you to use this listserv to

communicate changes and requests to the Accreditation office with the National Recreation and Park Association. A friendly reminder is to be sure the proper notation for your accreditation appears at your University and on all of your program accreditation documents: Accredited by the Council on Accreditation for Recreation, Park Resources, and Leisure Services. As specialty professions affiliate with COA this notation will be updated to reflect the partnering organizations.

5. Several programs including the pilot schools have begun to prepare their self studies using the 2013 outcome standards. The Council is in process of developing forms and criteria to evaluate these standards and outcomes. The Council did agree in principle to use a format similar to the present format to both prepare the self-study and review the 1.00-6.00. For the 7.00 series, the Council is encouraging programs to use as a guide the questions found on the December 2008 FAQ <http://www.nrpa.org/content/default.aspx?documentID=8684>. We anticipate soliciting the pilot schools to assist Council in drafting forms to use as the 7.00 learner outcomes are evaluated.
6. Training on both the present standards and the 2013 outcome standards will occur in Salt Lake City, on October 13 and 14. The full training, University Accreditation and COA Visitor Training, is scheduled for Tuesday, October 13 from 2:00 – 5:15 PM. A separate training, Evolving Evidence: An Introduction to the 2013 Standards, is scheduled for Wednesday, October 14 from 2:00 – 4:15. The Council affirmed that every program and potential visitor must participate in a training for preparation of, and prior to, review under the 2013 criteria.
7. During our reviews, we discovered that the template for syllabi was inadvertently left out of the updated handbook presently posted under Academic Accreditation on the NRPA website. The template is helpful to assure Council members and visitors are able to identify learner experiences that address each standard. Recommended content of syllabi are similar to university protocols: Course title, number, credits, instructor (s), description, objectives, topical schedule or calendar for the semester, student assignments and learning experiences including readings and experiential activities, policies, delivery mode, grading criteria, and course resources.
8. A number of summer projects are planned to support the pilot programs, prepare to train programs and visitors for the 2013 outcome reviews, and update COA operational documents to support the transition to learner outcomes. To illustrate, for example, the handbook will be updated to incorporate affiliate partners, and the current annual update for accreditation form will be updated to reflect annual progress reports on all program's assessment plans and results of ongoing data collection activities. One training resource from the Higher Learning Commission, Academic Quality Improvement Program (pdf document), helpful to preparation of program assessment and learning outcomes is attached. Another resource is the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, <http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/>. The updating of FAQ's related to the COA's transition to learner outcomes will continue to respond to questions most recently raised at the SPRE Teaching Institute, the Chairs meeting, and TRECII.

Thank you all who have been in touch with the Council and accreditation staff to share thoughts on outcomes assessment. We look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming COA trainings this fall and in the interim, hope you enjoy your summer!