

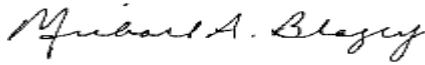


Council on
Accreditation

Parks, Recreation, Tourism
and Related Professions

Memorandum

To: Accredited Programs and Visitors

From: Mike Blazey 
Chair, Council on Accreditation for Recreation, Park Resources and Leisure Services

Re: Summer COA Memo 2010

Date: June 28, 2010

Greetings Colleagues.

The Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism, and Related Professions held its Spring meeting and hearings at NRPA headquarters in Ashburn, VA on April 11 through 13, 2010. Information on the status of Council, accredited programs, the new learning outcomes-based standards to be adopted in 2013, and other information of interest to accredited programs and visitors is provided below.

Council adopted its new name in fall 2009 in order to reflect the breadth of programs likely to seek accreditation and the inclusion of specialty accreditation affiliates. A new logo was commissioned and appears on this communication. Council appointed two new members, Candace Good-Vick from North Carolina State University as an At-Large Educator and Mike Peterson from Salt Lake City as Practitioner Representative. They replace Marcia Carter and Jamie Sabbach whom Council thanks for the significant contributions they have made during this period of transition to outcome-based standards.

There are 86 accredited programs and four preliminary applicants, down from the historical high of 112 accredited programs reflecting the dissolution of some programs and current financial exigency. Nevertheless, Council remains viable and committed to the academic integrity of member programs.

The 2013 standards are being pilot tested by six programs over the next two years, following a beta test with Texas A&M University. The six schools with hearing dates in parentheses are:

1. SUNY – Cortland (fall 2010)
2. Ithaca College (spring 2011)
3. University of Illinois (fall 2011)
4. UNC-Greensboro (fall 2011)
5. Arkansas Tech (fall 2012)
6. CSU Chico (fall 2012)

Texas A&M was visited in fall 2008 by Council member Chris Nunes, who reviewed eligibility and non-academic standards 1.00 through 6.00. These standards are largely consistent with those in the 2004 standards; however, some modifications have been made. Please visit the following website for further information on this set of standards. <http://www.nrpa.org/Content.aspx?id=1188>

The Texas A&M program was visited a second time in the fall of 2009 by Council members Marcia Carter and Michael Blazey, who reviewed the new 7.00 learning outcomes standards. The hearing was conducted at the recently concluded spring Council meeting and reaccreditation was granted. The beta test resulted in some changes to the standards. Among these is the reassignment of standards 7.01 and 7.02 to the 1.00 series as these were considered to be eligibility standards rather than learning outcomes. Two standards in the 7.00 series, 7.01.03 and 7.03.01, were revised to clarify Council intent. The beta program review also resulted in the development of three evaluative documents, a visitation team report template, a Visitor Review of Learning Outcomes, and a Behavior Anchored Rating Scale (BARS). The BARS provides site visitors with a standardized evaluative approach for the criteria employed by a program to assess learning outcomes. "Behaviors" assessed are judgments about indirect and direct evidence of achievement of learning outcomes. These documents are being made available to the pilot schools and will be made available on the Council website following further refinement.

The first of the six pilot programs, SUNY Cortland, was visited by Council members Jeff Witman and Michael Blazey in early May. The hearing is scheduled for this fall in Minneapolis.

Council has required its members to serve as visitors during the pilot process in order to gain familiarity with implementation of the new standards, establish visitation procedures, and develop visitor training. Now that three Council members have participated in beta/pilot visitations, they will lead future pilot visitations with other members until each Council member has participated in a visit. This will qualify the educator members on Council to lead pilot visitations when senior visitors are invited to participate later in the pilot phase. Pilot programs also have agreed to assign a faculty member who has been trained as a visitor under the 2004 standards to serve as a "shadow" visitor, thereby further adding to the pool of visitors familiar with the new standards.

As many are aware, Council has begun to partner with other professional organizations in parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions to develop Specialty Accreditation Committees (SAC) and draft profession-specific learning outcome standards. These specialty standards will take the place of the current option standards, which will be in place until the end of 2012. (NOTE: Programs undergoing reaccreditation prior to 2013 may seek reaccreditation for the current options until the 2013 standards are implemented and will retain option accreditation for five years from the date of reaccreditation.) Among the affiliate organizations currently developing SACs and drafting learning outcomes are the American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA),

the National Association of Recreation Resource Planners (NARRP), and the National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS).

Council will continue to update the FAQ's on the 2013 standards as revisions to the standards and procedures are adopted. Please check back frequently.

Council also has adopted significant changes to the hearing procedures, to be implemented in fall 2011. Council will no longer physically convene for a spring meeting; however, at the discretion of the Executive Committee, teleconferences may be scheduled to conduct business. All accreditation hearings will be conducted in the fall at the time of the National Recreation and Park Association Congress. Given the large number of hearings that will be scheduled, Council plans to convene two sub-Councils, consisting of five Council members each that will conduct concurrent hearings. By-laws require that reaccreditation decisions must be made by the full Council, so Council will reconvene at the conclusion of all hearings, hear reports and recommendations from the sub-Councils, and then render decisions. Programs will learn the status of their accreditation when decisions are announced at the conclusion of the Council business meeting. Based on the past agendas, the announcements will be made late Tuesday morning. Council also adopted a policy that Council accreditation actions are to be disclosed by the Council Chair or Staff Liaison only. In an effort to align the payment schedule with the new hearing structure all programs will be invoiced annually by NRPA in January with a due date of March 1st. Programs will be assessed the application fee of \$1750 for the calendar year in which they have a hearing and the annual fee of \$700 each of the other years. Your program will receive a communication from COAPRT accreditation staff identifying your program's next visit, hearing and payment schedule. Please contact Sara Baldwin, sbaldwin@nrpa.org for further information.

The move to one set of hearings per year also will affect the scheduling of visitations, which will occur between November and April of each year. As a consequence, programs scheduled for visitation in fall of the current year (2010) will be granted a de facto extension as their hearings will be moved from spring to fall 2011. Council staff will be in communication with the affected programs.

Additional significant changes to the self study review and visitation process also have been adopted.

Effective with the current round of visitations (spring 2010), the Council Chair is required to review all self studies to verify eligibility criteria and completeness of the self-study prior to confirming site visits. Once verification is complete, the self study is forwarded to two Council members serving as Lead and Second reviewers. Council also has begun implementing an Associate Evaluator process, forwarding the self study to an individual who has significant visitor experience and/or service on the Council for an independent review. The Associate Evaluator's questions and comments will be included in communications sent to the visitation team prior to the scheduled visit. Pre-visitation communications with visitors now include specific questions requiring responses from the visitation team as a component of their report to Council.

When the 2013 standards are implemented, visitation teams will be comprised of two, rather than three individuals. This change was implemented in an effort to reduce costs for programs. Professionals will continue to serve on visitation teams whenever possible; however, this change significantly increases the need for qualified professional visitors. Please ask your professional colleagues to consider undergoing training to serve in this important capacity. Additional visitors will be assigned to teams reviewing programs undergoing specialty accreditation, with the additional visitors coming from a pool developed by the SACs.

Council staff will be surveying all visitors via email asking for their expertise with professional specialties, familiarity with the new standards/process, the number of years of service as a Council visitor, and, if they are a senior visitor, whether they are interested in serving as an Associate Evaluator. Respondents also will be asked to identify others whom they feel would make good visitors and whether they intend to attend fall 2010 training.

A second survey will be conducted with member programs asking for the name of their program, the name of the department in which it resides, their schedule moving forward with the new standards, intent to attend the October 2010 training, what options/specialties/tracks/emphasis they have for which they might consider accreditation if specialty accreditation exists, and any suggestions of organizations which might supply the expertise through an affiliation agreement and development of a SAC.

Council will be co-sponsoring an academic Quiz Bowl with NRPA and SPRE at the 2010 NRPA Congress. Teams of students from four accredited programs will compete in a competition with the winning team recognized as the national quiz bowl champion.

In addition to the FAQs and other information found on the Council website, <http://www.nrpa.org/COA/>, the COA Accreditation Handbook is a valuable resource. This document, currently undergoing revisions, will reflect the changes in policies and procedures enacted by Council at its recent meeting and should be available online in the next few weeks.