

CommunityMatters™

A Monthly Newsletter for the ABET Community

August 2006

InsideABET

ABET Launches New Monthly Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of *CommunityMatters*, a new monthly newsletter for the ABET community. *CommunityMatters* replaces ABET's semi-annual newsletter, *Communications Link*.

Each month in *CommunityMatters*, you'll see the latest information on the accreditation process, learn a thing or two about assessment, discover what's new on our website, find out about upcoming meetings and workshops, get a closer look at a dedicated ABET volunteer, and more. *CommunityMatters* strives to be timely, informative, and driven by the community we serve — you.

We welcome your comments about ABET's newest publication. Please e-mail them to Liz Glazer, Communications Manager, at eglazer@abet.org.

Program Evaluator Training Piloted

Over the course of the last year, by charge of the ABET Board of Directors, member society representatives and ABET staff have been developing a comprehensive new training process for potential program evaluators. The new process includes independent pre-work and one-and-a-half days of face-to-face training. The pre-work features units on ABET basics, assessment, and applying the general criteria, while the interactive training includes mock interviews, team meetings, and program and institution debriefs, all based on the participants' analysis of a mock self-study and display materials.

Key to the training is its emphasis on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of successful program evaluators (see the ABET Program Evaluator Competency Model at www.abet.org/volunteer.shtml). Approved

— continued on page 2

VolunteerSpotlight

Susan Schall

Susan O. Schall, Ph.D., CQE, first became involved in ABET activities when she volunteered to be a program evaluator for the Institute of Industrial Engineers (IIE) in 1992. Since that time, she has served as an Engineering Accreditation Commission (EAC) team chair on seven visits, a Member-at-Large on the EAC Executive Committee, and a facilitator for a Faculty Workshop for Continuous Improvement. Currently, Susan is an IIE representative on the ABET Board of Directors and is the Board Liaison to the Computing Accreditation Commission (CAC).



Susan has been highly engaged in ABET's process improvement initiative for volunteer recruitment, selection, training, and evaluation. Having served as an EAC trainer and as the chair of the EAC Quality and Innovation Committee, she was acutely aware of the need to revise ABET's training approaches. Accordingly, she volunteered to spend a day at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), learning from the organization that maintains the Baldrige program.

The materials and knowledge she gathered during this experience provided the seeds to develop a more consistent and adult learner-oriented training process for ABET's volunteers.

When design teams for the Participation Project were formed last year, Susan's name was among the first suggested for the training sub-team, and her contributions to the team were invaluable. She has generously continued to contribute her time and talents to this project by serving as a core facilitator for this summer's beta testing and pilot for the revised training processes. Furthermore, her experience led to her selection

for the 2006 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Board of Examiners.

Susan is the President/Owner of SOS Consulting, LLC, a process improvement consulting firm in Virginia. She received her BS, MS, and Ph.D. in industrial engineering from Penn State and a BS in mathematics from the State University of New York, College at Fredonia. Susan is certified as a Certified Quality Engineer (CQE) by the American Society for Quality (ASQ).

LookAhead

August 17 — ABET Industry Advisory Council (IAC) Meeting in Pinehurst, NC

Sept. 1 — Nomination deadline for the President's Award for Diversity

Sept. 22 — ABET Board Executive Committee Meeting in Baltimore, MD

Sept. 29 — Registration deadline for the October 24 Faculty Workshop on Assessing Program Outcomes in Tampa, FL

— Pre-registration deadline for the 2006 Commission Summit and the 2006 ABET Annual Meeting in Tampa, FL

InsideABET

— continued from page 1

by ABET's Board of Directors last fall, these competencies are now used to recruit, select, train, and assess all evaluators.

It is expected that the new program evaluator training process, if adopted, will provide participants with a great professional development opportunity, solidly prepare evaluators for their vital role in ABET's accreditation process, and ultimately increase consistency among evaluations.

IDEAL Helps Assessment Novices Develop Effective Plans for Their Programs

Gloria Rogers, ABET's Associate Executive Director of Professional Services, is conducting ABET's first Institute for the Development of Excellence in Assessment Leadership (IDEAL) from July 31 through August 4. This five-day, professional development opportunity is designed specifically to help those who possess "beginner to marginal" assessment experience prepare to lead the development and implementation of a program assessment plan that improves student learning and documents program effectiveness. IDEAL participants work with colleagues to develop new assessment knowledge and skills and should leave the program having completed an assessment implementation plan they can initiate at their home institutions.

Acceptance into IDEAL included completing a significant application form and securing a letter of support from the applicant's supervisor. Approximately 35 individuals were selected to participate, including representatives from programs covered by all four of the ABET commissions, from two-year and four-year institutions, and from five international institutions.

Following attendance in this month's program, participants will become IDEAL Scholars, which entitles them to a year of extensive support as they implement their assessment plans. This includes exclusive access to materials and discussions via a SharePoint® portal and admission to quarterly IDEAL webinars, in addition to the assessment information available to the public at www.abet.org/assessment.shtml.

Dates, location, and application deadline for next year's IDEAL will be announced this winter.

Peterson to Receive IEEE Education Award

ABET Executive Director George D. Peterson, Ph.D., P.E., has been selected as the 2006 recipient of The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers' (IEEE) Education Society Achievement Award. This honor recognizes Peterson's "sustained positive contributions to engineering education" through his many years of work as an educator and academic administrator and for his long service in leading the continuing development of ABET. The award will be bestowed during a ceremony at the 36th Annual Frontiers in Education Conference in October.

Commission Summit Program to Include A "PEV's Eye View"

The program for this year's Commission Summit, which will take place on Wednesday, October 25, immediately prior to the ABET Annual Meeting, has been announced.

The morning plenary session, "A PEV's Eye View," will provide participants with information about what it's like to be a program

evaluator on a visit. The session will demonstrate how program evaluators are prepared for the visit and how they approach a program's evaluation. Participants preparing for a visit will find the session very valuable.

The balance of the Commission Summit will provide institutional representatives with detailed, commission-specific breakout sessions covering all aspects of the ABET accreditation process.

Representatives from new programs, programs seeking their initial ABET evaluations, and those with visits scheduled for the 2007-2008 or 2008-2009 cycles are strongly encouraged to attend this special event. More details are available at www.abet.org/summit.shtml.

ABET Formally Instates President's Award for Diversity

Last year, Richard O. Anderson bestowed a special President's Award for Diversity to four educational bodies that have made significant efforts to encourage diversity in the applied science, computing, engineering, and technology arenas. This year, the ABET President's Award for Diversity has been formally instituted and will be presented annually at the ABET Annual Meeting in October.

The ABET President's Award for Diversity aims to recognize educational units, individuals, associations, or firms for extraordinary success in facilitating or achieving diversity and inclusivity in the technical segments of our society. Self-nominations are encouraged.

Details about nomination criteria are available at www.abet.org/diversity.shtml. For consideration, ABET headquarters must receive applications for this year's awards electronically no later than September 1.

ABETOnline

- ▶ Register for the 2006 ABET Annual Meeting at www.abet.org/register.shtml.
- ▶ Sign up for ABET's E-NEWS alerts at www.abet.org/sign_up.shtml.
- ▶ Get ideas for promoting your accreditation at www.abet.org/promote.shtml.

CommunityMatters™

CommunityMatters is a monthly publication of ABET, Inc., produced for and distributed to more than 3,000 stakeholders, including ABET-accredited programs; ABET commission, Board, and council members; ABET member societies; and program evaluators.

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Assessment 101

Assessment Tips with Gloria Rogers, Ph.D.

Direct and Indirect Assessments:

What Are They Good For?

There has been a lot of discussion (and confusion) in the ABET community about direct and indirect assessments: What are they? Do you have

to use both when measuring student learning?

Direct assessments (measures) are most familiar to faculty. Direct assessments provide for the direct examination or observation of student knowledge or skills against measurable learning outcomes. Faculty conduct direct assessments of student learning throughout a course using such techniques as exams, quizzes, demonstrations, and reports. These techniques provide a sampling of what students know and/or can do and provide strong evidence of student learning.

However, not all learning can be measured in a direct way. For example, a desired outcome of a course may be to create more positive student attitudes toward mathematics (or writing, or team work), which are difficult to assess using direct methods.

Indirect assessments of student learning ascertain the perceived extent or value of learning experiences. They assess opinions or thoughts about student knowledge or skills. Indirect measures can provide information about student perception of their learning and how this learning is valued by different constituencies.

However, as evidence of student learning, indirect measures are not as strong as direct measures because assumptions must be made about what exactly the self-report means. If students report that they have attained a particular learning outcome, how can that report be validated? An indirect assessment is useful in that it can be used to measure certain implicit qualities of student learning, such as values, perceptions, and attitudes, from a variety of perspectives. However, in the absence of direct evidence, assumptions must be made about how well perceptions match the reality of actual achievement of student learning.

It is important to remember that all assessment methods have their limitations and contain some bias. A meaningful assessment program would use both direct and indirect assessments from a variety of sources (students, alumni, faculty, employers, etc.). This use of multiple assessment methods provides converging evidence of student learning. Indirect methods provide a valuable supplement to direct methods and are generally a part of a robust assessment program. The table below illustrates examples of direct and indirect assessments.

Note: In my last column in ABET's now-retired Communications Link newsletter, I challenged readers with an assessment crossword puzzle. Thanks to everyone who faxed in their answers — but no one got a perfect score! Visit my web page for the completed puzzle: www.abet.org/assessment.shtml.

Method	Direct	Indirect	Method	Direct	Indirect
Exit and Other Interviews		✓	Locally Developed Exams	✓	
Simulations	✓		External Examiner	✓	
Behavioral Observations	✓		Written Surveys, Questionnaires		✓
Archival Data		✓	Portfolios	✓	
Focus Groups		✓	Oral Exams	✓	
Performance Appraisal	✓		Standardized Exams	✓	

YourCorner

Board of Directors

It's time to make your travel plans for Tampa! The fall Board of Directors meeting is on Saturday, October 28. In addition, all Board members are required to attend the Friday, October 27, sessions of the 2006 ABET Annual Meeting.

Commissioners

Congratulations on another accreditation cycle well-done! Take some time for yourself this August, but fall visits are right around the corner! Time to start reading those self-studies and connecting with your team. Some team chairs find pre-visit conference calls a real benefit to the team. If you would like to set up a call for your team, contact ABET's Accreditation Manager Ellen Stokes at estokes@abet.org. Don't forget to specify web conference or voice only.

Institutions

Visit dates for the 2006-2007 evaluation cycle are being finalized. If you are scheduled for a visit this fall, it's a good idea to review section II.E.3, "On-site Visit," of ABET's *Accreditation Policy and Procedure Manual*. Keep in close contact with your team chair. It's best to get questions answered, requests for information received, and schedules finalized *before* the team arrives on campus.

Member Societies

We're down to the wire for this fall's visits! If necessary, make any final adjustments to evaluator and observer assignments to cover conflicts. Also, ABET will provide commission seat allocations for the 2007-2008 cycle by late August so you can begin to identify commission nominees long before the December 22 deadline.

Program Evaluators

Visit season is upon us. If you are scheduled for a visit this fall, it's time to take a close look at your self-study. Try to iron out any confusion *before* you get to campus. Discuss concerns with your team chair and other team members. If needed, communicate these to the institution directly or via your team chair if you are a CAC or TAC evaluator.

Member Societies

ABET is a federation of 28 professional and technical societies representing the fields of applied science, computing, engineering, and technology:

American Academy of Environmental Engineers	Health Physics Society
American Congress on Surveying and Mapping	The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc.
American Industrial Hygiene Association	Institute of Industrial Engineers, Inc.
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Inc.	ISA-The Instrumentation, Systems, and Automation Society
American Institute of Chemical Engineers	Materials Research Society
American Nuclear Society	National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying
American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers	National Institute of Ceramic Engineers
American Society of Civil Engineers	National Society of Professional Engineers
American Society for Engineering Education	Society of Automotive Engineers
American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc.	Society of Manufacturing Engineers
The American Society of Mechanical Engineers	Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration, Inc.
American Society of Safety Engineers	Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers
Biomedical Engineering Society	Society of Petroleum Engineers
CSAB, Inc.	The Minerals, Metals, and Materials Society



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