

# CommunityMatters™

A Monthly Newsletter for the ABET Community

September 2007

## Inside ABET

### Commission Summit to Focus on Self-Study Preparation and More

The annual Commission Summit is a day-long event designed to immerse institutional representatives in the ABET accreditation process and provide an opportunity for them to interact with commission leaders who can address many of their questions and concerns.

This year's Summit will take place at the Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe Resort & Casino in Incline Village, Nevada, on Wednesday, October 31. This event will begin with a two-hour session that aims to help institutional representatives prepare an effective self-study report for their program(s). Leaders from the four ABET commissions will expound on how the self-study questionnaire is organized, how to create a timetable to complete it, how visiting teams will use the report, and what ABET is doing to simplify the process of creating it. Furthermore, they will address concerns about how to respond to self-study questions, how to approach the self-study if an institution has multiple programs being evaluated, how to prepare an effective report about a program's assessment processes, and much more.

During the remainder of the Summit, participants will break into smaller groups that will address commission-specific issues. Presenters will elaborate on the respective commission's criteria, the fundamental aspects of the continuous program improvement process, and key items that ABET evaluators will be looking for when they visit campus and examine the program's display materials. In addition, there will also be discussions about the new 'renumbered' general criteria to be used for the first time in 2008. The session's format encourages the participation of the representatives in attendance, and

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## Volunteer Spotlight

### Bill Sayle and Dave Baker

Hundreds of ABET volunteers are gearing up for campus visits worldwide. But who decides which volunteers would be a good match for each program, considering factors such as the individual's availability for visit dates and their possible conflicts of interest?

Each of ABET's member societies has assigners who are faced with this challenge on an annual basis, and many of these coordinators are volunteers. Two such individuals are Bill Sayle and Dave Baker, longtime volunteers with IEEE.

IEEE has the formidable job of assigning hundreds of evaluators each year, with 134 programs in electrical, computer, telecommunications, and other fields to review just this fall. Bill Sayle, a professor emeritus from the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Georgia Tech, assigns more than 100 evaluators each cycle for the Engineering Accreditation Commission (EAC) with the help of a small team. Together, they strive for a 50-50 balance of representatives from academe and from industry or government. Also, if

a program had a visitor from academia for its previous general review visit, they try to secure a practitioner for the next review.

Dave Baker, the former Director of the School of Engineering Technology at Rochester Institute of Technology, handles all of the IEEE assignments for the Technology Accreditation

Commission (TAC) annually. He coordinates the evaluators for 50 visits, approximately 40 percent of all the TAC program assignments each year.

"We try to get all new program evaluators out on a visit during their first year," Dave said. "They should have the opportunity to use their training the first year. We also try to assign evaluators who have experience with two-year programs to associate degree programs and try to get as many of our industry and government program evaluators as possible assigned to visits. We feel it is important to bring their perspective to program reviews."

"The process is a lengthy one," Bill said. "Fortunately, the good will and cooperation from all concerned — team chairs, visitors, and institution — makes the process work."



Bill Sayle



Dave Baker

## Look Ahead

**Sept. 7** — Registration deadline for Sept. 22 Faculty Workshop on Assessing Program Outcomes, Baltimore, MD

**Sept. 17** — Society Summit, Baltimore, MD

**Sept. 22** — Faculty Workshop on Assessing Program Outcomes, Baltimore, MD

**Sept. 28** — Registration deadline for the Oct. 31 Faculty Workshop on Assessing Program Outcomes, Incline Village, NV

— Pre-registration deadline for the 2007 Commission Summit and the 2007 ABET Annual Meeting, Incline Village, NV

# InsideABET

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their questions and concerns will direct a lengthy open dialogue on these topics.

Representatives from programs that have a visit scheduled during the 2008-2009 or 2009-2010 cycle are strongly encouraged to attend this event to help prepare for their campus visits. This is particularly true for representatives who are from new programs, whose programs are seeking initial accreditation, or who are new to the accreditation process. However, representatives from all programs are invited to learn about the accreditation process and to have questions about their programs' ongoing continuous improvement efforts addressed.

Register for the Commission Summit, as well as the 2007 ABET Annual Meeting, online at [www.abet.org/annual.shtml](http://www.abet.org/annual.shtml).

## New Fact Sheet Answers FAQs About PAVE

For the past year, ABET has been focused on strengthening the processes for program

# PAVE

evaluator recruitment, selection, training, and performance appraisal through its Partnership to Advance Volunteer Excellence (PAVE).

Recently, a comprehensive new fact sheet has been developed to explain exactly what PAVE is and to elaborate upon key elements about implementing process improvements related to ABET program evaluator recruitment, selection, training, and performance appraisal. The PAVE Project Fact Sheet developed for use by ABET member societies, board members, commissioners, and staff details what's new for each of these four areas, defines which responsibilities are the purview of the ABET member societies and which fall to the ABET headquarters staff, provides an implementation timeline for each of the

improvements, and lists additional PAVE resources and where to find them.

The PAVE Project Fact Sheet is now online at [www.abet.org/pave.shtml](http://www.abet.org/pave.shtml). If you have any comments about the usefulness of this document, contact ABET's Communications Manager, Liz Glazer, at [eglazer@abet.org](mailto:eglazer@abet.org).

## ABET Member Societies to Share Best Practices for Managing Volunteers at Upcoming Summit

On Monday, September 17, ABET will host a Society Summit for volunteers and staff members from its 28 member societies. This event will bring together the individuals who have direct responsibility for their society's accreditation activities so that they can share best practices and discuss how ABET as a whole can effectively work to improve the accreditation experience for all involved.

The agenda for this day-long session will include progress reports from the PAVE project team as well as presentations from society representatives about the following elements of the program evaluator life cycle:

- ▶ Using mentors to develop successful program evaluators (PEVs)
- ▶ Training evaluators on program criteria using both asynchronous and real-time methods
- ▶ Recruiting and selecting for a more diverse pool of candidates
- ▶ Gathering information using the new PEV application tool
- ▶ Communicating performance appraisal feedback to PEVs and PEV applicants

The Society Summit will expose participants to methods for training on program-

specific criteria, effective volunteer recruiting tools and practices, and other information that will help to make the experience of ABET volunteers more rewarding.

## "Accredited by ABET" Logos Promote Your Program's Accreditation

Whether your program just received its first ABET accreditation or it has been accredited for several decades, the faculty and staff will want to communicate its accredited sta-

tus to many audiences. One means to do this is with the "Accredited by ABET" logos available at [www.abet.org/promote.shtml](http://www.abet.org/promote.shtml).

Any accredited program may use the logo for the respective ABET commission that has accredited it on its website and in its marketing materials. The logos are provided in both color and black-and-white and in both print-and web-ready formats. A companion style guide will instruct institutions about where and how they can use these official logos.

**Note:** The use of these logos is limited solely to programs that have received ABET accreditation.



## Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday to CommunityMatters!



Thanks for reading ABET's newsletter over the past year! We hope it's brought you some timely and useful information. If you have any feedback about this publication, please send your comments to Liz Glazer at [eglazer@abet.org](mailto:eglazer@abet.org).

## ABETOnline

- ▶ Register for the 2007 Annual Meeting at [www.abet.org/annual.shtml](http://www.abet.org/annual.shtml).
- ▶ View the presentations from this year's Institutional Representatives' Day events at [www.abet.org/presentations.shtml](http://www.abet.org/presentations.shtml).
- ▶ Download the latest self-study materials at [www.abet.org/forms.shtml](http://www.abet.org/forms.shtml).

## CommunityMatters™

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# Assessment 101

## Assessment Tips with Gloria Rogers, Ph.D.

### Meaningless Measurement

Much of the frustration over assessing student learning outcomes can be traced to the fact that, in most cases, the data that are collected are not very meaningful. In other words, they are data and not information.

For example, it may be possible to identify that students need to improve their communication skills; however, when questioned about which aspects of their communication skills are the weakest, the data don't reveal that information. This is because faculty are generally asked to comment about their view of student writing in their courses. Sometimes scales are even used to quantify their opinion (e.g., 1-needs improvement, 2-fair, 3-good, 4-excellent). Faculty are then asked to turn in their ratings, and someone takes the scores from all courses, aggregates them, and reports the results in terms of an average.

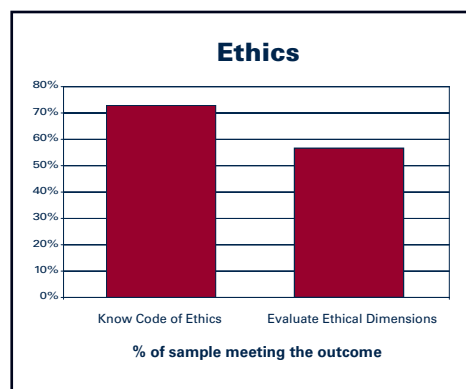
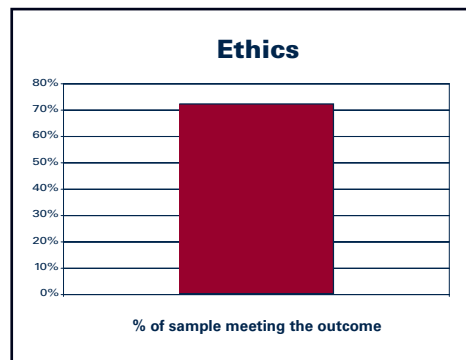
Using this example, an average score of 1.8 would indicate that some intervention should be developed and implemented. However, the data do not point to specific areas of improvement that are needed. In other words, 1.8 does not indicate *what* needs to be improved — grammar, sentence structure, mechanics, etc. How would faculty be able to provide direction to students or give them feedback on their areas of weakness? How would they incorporate classroom strategies that would provide opportunities for students to practice specific skills within courses? Telling students that they need to improve their writing isn't very helpful unless the faculty expectations for acceptable writing skills are made explicit.

The most critical step of creating a valid, meaningful continuous improvement process is to define the anticipated student learning outcomes into a few measurable performance criteria that, when measured, give direct evidence of student learning related to the outcome. For instance, when measuring students' understanding of ethical responsibilities, the program faculty might decide that they are going to focus on two indicators related to the outcome of "understanding ethical responsibilities":

- 1) By the time of graduation, students should know the code of ethics for their discipline.
- 2) By the time of graduation, students should

be able to evaluate the ethical dimensions of a problem in their discipline.

These two performance indicators do not encompass *all* possible concepts and performances that could be measured for the outcome. However, if the faculty have agreed that these two indicators represent the most important aspects of the outcome, then data that measure student performance in each of these areas can be collected and used to provide information relevant to how well the program is enhancing student learning related to the outcome. In the absence of defining the learning outcomes to a few measurable performance criteria (indicators), there is too much 'noise' in the results to know what the data mean. Any suggested remedy would be, at best, a guess. In the examples below, which is 'data' and which is 'information?'



Unless programs begin to focus on a few performance indicators for each outcome and measure the indicators in meaningful (and efficient) ways, the 'continuous quality improvement' of student learning will not be quality, nor will it result in meaningful improvement. Instead, it will remain an onerous paper-pushing process with little value for the effort faculty are investing.

# YourCorner

## Board of Directors

It's time to make your travel plans for Lake Tahoe! The fall Board of Directors meeting is on Saturday, November 3. In addition, all Board members are strongly encouraged to attend the 2007 ABET Annual Meeting on Thursday, November 1, and Friday, November 2. Rachele Daucher will contact you about registration and other details.

## Commissioners

Fall visits are just around the corner! Therefore, you should be reading those self-studies and connecting with your visit team members. If you think that a pre-visit conference call with your team would be helpful in preparing for your trip to campus, contact ABET's Accreditation Manager Ellen Stokes at [estokes@abet.org](mailto:estokes@abet.org) about your needs.

## Institutions

If you are scheduled for a visit during the next few months, this is a good time to review section II.E.3, "On-Site Visit," of ABET's *Accreditation Policy and Procedure Manual*. Also, make sure that you are communicating regularly with your team chair. It's best to address any issues of concern *before* the team arrives on campus.

## Member Societies

Don't forget that the Society Summit is only a few weeks away! If you know of any best practices related to developing volunteer excellence, share them with the representatives from your society who are attending this event. They will have the opportunity to exchange ideas with accreditation leaders from other ABET member societies. More importantly, make sure that you follow up with them about what they took away from the Summit. They may have learned about tools and approaches that will benefit your society's volunteers.

## Program Evaluators

Have you begun reading your self-studies? Make sure that you bring any concerns to the attention of your team chair and other team members *before* you get to campus. Your team chair will contact the institution you are visiting to discuss such matters further, if warranted.

# 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	IEEE, Inc.
American Industrial Hygiene Association	Institute of Industrial Engineers, Inc.
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Inc.	ISA
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
American Society of Safety Engineers	Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration, Inc.
ASME	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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