

# CommunityMatters™

A Monthly Newsletter for the ABET Community

May 2008

## Inside ABET

### Educational Delivery Task Team Presents Four Recommendations to ABET Board

At its March 2007 meeting, the ABET Board of Directors determined that one of its highest priorities in meeting the needs of its constituents would be to address the current and evolving issues surrounding educational delivery. In particular, the Board wished to consider what the emergence of new educational delivery methods and institutions means for ABET and how the organization will approach their quality assurance.

Over the past year, the Educational Delivery Strategic Task Team, which consisted of nine dedicated ABET volunteers and was chaired by Susan Schall, worked diligently to further refine the issues surrounding educational delivery, to determine outcomes that would satisfy them, and to plan approaches to address their solution. At the Board's spring meeting on Saturday, March 29, Schall presented the task group's final report as well as the following recommendations for the Board's action:

- ▶ The ABET Board of Directors should evaluate current policies, procedures, and the financial model and improve as appropriate to enable the accreditation of programs, regardless of the method(s) used to deliver the program or the type of institution; implement a continuous improvement loop to improve policies, procedures, and the financial model continuously.
- ▶ The ABET Board of Directors should implement measures associated with the three educational delivery desired outcomes, establish processes to track, and use the measures for continuous improvement of policies, procedures, financial model,

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## Volunteer Spotlight

### Larry Jones

Lawrence G. Jones, Ph.D., is a Senior Member of the Technical Staff at the Software Engineering Institute (SEI) of Carnegie Mellon University. Prior to that, Larry had a 22-year career in the United States Air Force in several software development and management positions. At the time he retired from service, Larry was the Chair of the Computer Science Department at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Larry first became involved in accreditation activities on the "receiving end," when his program at the Air Force Academy was the first to be visited by the newly formed Computing Sciences Accreditation Commission (CSAC), which later evolved into ABET's current Computing Accreditation Commission (CAC).

"I was so impressed by the visiting team's professionalism and quality that I volunteered to help at the earliest opportunity," he said. "Twenty years later, I'm still enthusiastic."

And Larry's enthusiasm has not faltered over the past two decades. When computing came under ABET's purview, Larry was on the CSAC Executive Committee and had co-lead the effort to create and roll-out the criteria that CAC now uses. After the merger, Larry became a member of CAC's Executive

Committee, serving as Chair during the 2006-2007 accreditation cycle and Past Chair today. Larry is on the Steering Team for the Partnership to Advance Volunteer Excellence (PAVE) and is also a facilitator for PAVE program evaluator training. As if that isn't enough, Larry is a Representative Director and Treasurer of the Board of Directors for CSAB, the umbrella organization of professional societies that represents computing within ABET.

In addition, Larry has gained a cross-commission perspective as a software engineering program evaluator for the Engineering Accreditation Commission (EAC) and with early joint-commission evaluation visits. That experience prepared him for the latest role he's added to his ABET résumé, Chair of the Accreditation Council.

The Accreditation Council coordinates practices among the four ABET commissions. At present, the council is working to harmonize the criteria. Larry explains, "Criteria harmonization is about using common criteria wording where the intended meaning is the same across the commissions, NOT about forcing commonality where differences are necessary and intentional. This effort will make policies and documents more consistent, benefitting institutions as well as our volunteers."



## Look Ahead

May 17-18 — Program Evaluator Training, Phoenix, AZ

May 28 — Hotel registration deadline for June 21 Faculty Workshop on Assessing Program Outcomes, Pittsburgh, PA

June 21 — Faculty Workshop on Assessing Program Outcomes, Pittsburgh, PA

June 21-22 — Program Evaluator Training, Pittsburgh, PA

# InsideABET

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training, and other program evaluation-related processes.

- ▶ The Accreditation Council should evaluate current resources provided to evaluation teams and improve the resources to ensure teams are prepared to evaluate programs regardless of the method(s) used to deliver the program or type of institution; implement a continuous improvement loop to improve the resources continuously.
- ▶ The Accreditation Council should evaluate current resources available to programs and improve the resources to ensure programs are provided sufficient guidance to adequately describe how the program meets the criteria, regardless of the method(s) used to deliver the program or the type of institution; implement a continuous improvement loop to improve the resources continuously.

As a result of these recommendations, two new Board task teams will be established this spring. One group will be charged with reviewing ABET policies, procedures, and financial model to enable accreditation of programs delivered by alternative means and/or by non-traditional institutions. In so doing, they will engage representatives of programs offered by alternative means and non-traditional institutions. The second task team will be charged with implementing the metrics proposed by the Educational Delivery Strategic Task Team.

Once these teams have completed key elements of their work, the Accreditation Council will review the training, documentation, and guidance provided to ensure that institutions are sufficiently prepared to describe how their programs meet the criteria and that evaluation teams are prepared to evaluate programs, regardless of the method(s) used to deliver them or the type of institution.

## ABET Board Lifts Ban on Dual-Level Accreditation for Engineering Programs

At the March meeting of the ABET Board of Directors, the Board approved a change to section II.B.8.a. of ABET's *Accreditation Policy and Procedure Manual* that will allow institutions to seek accreditation for their engineering programs of the same area or discipline at two levels (i.e., bachelor's and master's) concurrently. The lifting of the ban within the Engineering Accreditation Commission takes effect with the 2009-2010 accreditation cycle.

Further information is available at [www.abet.org/dual.shtml](http://www.abet.org/dual.shtml).

## First ABET Webinar Series Concludes, CD Recordings Available

Last month, ABET completed its first webinar series. These interactive, Internet-based seminars allowed faculty to experience an informative, 90-minute presentation on their own computers while simultaneously hearing the presenter via speakerphone.

If you missed some of the webinars that interested you or simply wish to build your school's assessment and accreditation library, you can purchase a CD recording of any topic for \$149. Each CD will include the automated presentation with coinciding audio as well as a master set of handouts related to that topic.

A total of 11 subjects were covered in the 2007-2008 webinar series, including assessment basics and commission-specific accreditation visit preparation information. To view the full list of topics covered over the webinar series or to purchase CD recordings, visit [www.abet.org/webinar.shtml](http://www.abet.org/webinar.shtml).

## IDEAL Helps Assessment Novices Develop Effective Plans for Their Programs

Gloria Rogers, ABET's Associate Executive Director of Professional Services, will be conducting another session of the Institute for the Development of Excellence in Assessment Leadership (IDEAL) in Baltimore this summer, from August 4 through 8.

IDEAL is a five-day, professional development opportunity that 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 assessment knowledge and skills and should leave the program having completed an assessment implementation plan they can initiate at their home institutions.

Following attendance in the program, participants will become IDEAL Scholars, which entitles them to a year of extensive support as they implement their assessment plans.

Acceptance into IDEAL requires completing an application form and securing a letter of support from the applicant's supervisor. Only 40 individuals will be selected for this summer's event, so visit [www.abet.org/ideal.shtml](http://www.abet.org/ideal.shtml) to download the application today!

## Congratulations!

Engineering Accreditation Commission (EAC) Member-at-Large **Susan E. Conry, Ph.D.**, was named Distinguished Service Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering by full vote of the Board of Trustees at Clarkson University. Also, **John Orr, Ph.D.**, who represents IEEE on the EAC, is Worcester Polytechnic Institute's new provost and senior vice president. Congrats to both of them!

## ABETOnline

- ▶ Review the report from the March meeting of the ABET Board of Directors: [www.abet.org/board\\_report.shtml](http://www.abet.org/board_report.shtml).
- ▶ Apply for this summer's IDEAL at [www.abet.org/ideal.shtml](http://www.abet.org/ideal.shtml).
- ▶ Download the latest self-study materials at [www.abet.org/forms.shtml](http://www.abet.org/forms.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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*CommunityMatters* is online: [www.abet.org/newsletter.shtml](http://www.abet.org/newsletter.shtml)

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# Assessment<sup>101</sup>

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

### Are Expectations for Assessment Too Prescriptive?

Recently, the following concern was expressed to ABET through a comment box on its website:

"The outcomes-based assessment model needs to be better defined for institutions and programs. The new model seems to be evolving into a prescriptive process, with only one way to do assessment."

I would like to respond publicly to this comment, as I have heard it expressed at other times in other venues.

First, I would like to clarify that the new model for ABET accreditation is based on the principles of continuous quality improvement (CQI), of which student learning outcomes assessment is only a piece. Although that might not seem a significant clarification, we must continually remind ourselves that there are nine criteria that make up the general criteria for accreditation. (See "Continuous Quality Improvement and Program Assessment of Student Learning" in the May 2007 issue of *CommunityMatters*, online at [www.abet.org/newsletter.shtml](http://www.abet.org/newsletter.shtml).)

In addition, there is a maturation process that the organization and educational community have been going through from the time the new model was established to today. In the first cycle of visits, the volunteer leadership, as well as the accredited programs, were just trying to become knowledgeable about the new requirements. Understanding the differences between "objectives" and "outcomes," what "closing the loop" was, who the program's constituents were, etc., were the driving questions and concerns.

As the ABET volunteer leadership, visiting teams, and programs began to better understand these concepts, the focus was shifted to the meaning of "outcomes assessment." In the initial novice stage of development, for instance, most programs were depending on surveys to evaluate program quality. Programs could rightly say that they had data that provided evidence of quality, but the quality of the data was not robust. As assessment knowledge improved, programs and evaluators both began to analyze data collection methods, such as surveying, to deter-

mine if they were effectively providing valid information for program improvement, and they found them wanting.

As the accreditation process continues to mature and more experience is gained in implementing and improving CQI processes, the expectations continue to rise. This should be true for both the programs and the ABET volunteers who evaluate them. This does not mean accreditation has become more "prescriptive." Prescriptive criteria is the environment from which the ABET accreditation process has evolved. No one is going to tell programs that they must use a specific assessment method or develop a specific set of CQI processes to meet the requirements of accreditation. However, the bar will probably continue to be raised because what we've learned from earlier experiences helps us improve our overall process.

For example, it is not prescriptive to expect programs to define their outcomes (i.e., a-k or a-i), so that each has meaning and there can be more focus in the data collection process. Each program can define its outcomes in any way that reflects the students' needs and is consistent with enabling them to achieve the program educational objectives as graduates. It is up to the program how these are defined.

Furthermore, it is not prescriptive to expect programs to have direct measures of student learning. Programs can use any direct measures that meet their needs. All CQI processes have as their foundation valid, reliable data collection methods based on the direct observation or demonstration of a performance. It is up to the program to decide which method to use to collect that evidence.

In a CQI environment, the expectation is that no program would be at the same place in 2008 that it was in 2002. That is true for the quality of its assessment processes as well. Each program has to make choices among many options of robust assessment processes. To choose processes that are not robust should be unacceptable.

**IDEAL**

Apply now for the August 4-8 session of the Institute for the Development of Excellence in Assessment Leadership (IDEAL) in Baltimore at [www.abet.org/ideal.shtml](http://www.abet.org/ideal.shtml).

# YourCorner

## Board of Directors

Don't forget that ABET is developing the legal framework to begin the incorporation for the ABET Foundation. The foundation will be a public charity, 509A3, which will allow individuals, corporations, and trusts to provide gifts to ABET. You may want to speak to your employer about this opportunity and learn how to begin securing support for the foundation's endeavors.

## Commissioners

Just a reminder that photos for the next *Commission Directory* are due on Friday, May 9! All new commissioners and any returning commissioners who wish to update their current photos should e-mail their pictures to ABET's Communications Specialist, Keryl Cryer, at [kcryer@abet.org](mailto:kcryer@abet.org). The photos can be either color or black-and-white, but they should be portrait-style and must be at least 2 inches x 2 inches at 300 dpi. Furthermore, images must be in a tif or jpg format. Low-resolution images taken from websites or dropped into Microsoft Word files will **not** be accepted.

## Institutions

Are you thinking of revamping the marketing for your accredited program(s) this summer? Then, you may find helpful information at [www.abet.org/promote.shtml](http://www.abet.org/promote.shtml). This site features downloadable "Accredited by ABET" logos that accredited programs may use on their websites and in printed materials and suggestions for linking to the ABET website. You will also find tips about announcing your accreditation, press release templates, purchasing information about "Proud to Be Accredited" brochures and posters, and more.

## Member Societies

Don't forget that ABET has an array of recruitment materials that you can use to attract potential new volunteers. Items such as flyers, magazine ads, and PowerPoint presentations are available online at [www.abet.org/pave.shtml](http://www.abet.org/pave.shtml).

Also, are you retrieving the applications from potential new program evaluators regularly? If you have any questions about that process, contact Stephanie Brown at [sbrown@abet.org](mailto:sbrown@abet.org).

# 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	SAE International
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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