

CommunityMatters™

A Monthly Newsletter for the ABET Community

December 2008

InsideABET

ABET Executive Director George Peterson To Be Managing Director for International Business Development

At the fall meeting of the ABET Board of Directors last month, **George D. Peterson, Ph.D., P.E.**, announced that he would assume the newly created position of Managing Director for International Business Development and Executive Director Emeritus, effective November 1, 2008.

ABET's strategic plan has pointed to the increased importance of international activities, and this new position provides the focus and attention that is required to successfully address international opportunities and challenges. ABET is extremely fortunate to have a recognized pioneer in the international community as an integral part of its organization. Peterson has successfully introduced ABET as a worldwide quality assessment brand.

This appointment will continue to enhance ABET's reputation in the global arena. The organization has received an increasing number of requests for accreditation evaluations from institutions outside of the United States, as well as requests for assistance in establishing national and regional accrediting organizations. The creation of this position will help ensure that ABET fulfills the fundamentals of its vision — to provide world leadership in assuring quality and in stimulating innovation in applied science, computing, engineering, and technology education.

Peterson has the extraordinary knowledge and unique qualifications needed to fulfill this new role, having already provided outstanding leadership and stewardship over ABET's operations over the past 15 years. Peterson's significant activities in the international arena

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VolunteerSpotlight

Mohammad Zahraee

Mohammad A. Zahraee, Ph.D., P.E., has had an outstanding career at Purdue University Calumet, teaching technology and serving as an administrator for the institution's technology programs. He chaired the Manufacturing Engineering Technologies and Supervision Department for 11 years and acted as Chair of Electrical and Computer Engineering Technology at the institution for six years. The mayor of Hammond, Indiana, has acknowledged him for contributing to the lives of persons with disabilities, thanks to projects that his students completed to address this community's needs. Currently, Mohammad is a professor of mechanical engineering technology.

Zahraee first became involved in ABET when he volunteered to be a program evaluator from ASME in 1992. He served as a commissioner on the Technology Accreditation Commission (TAC) from 1998 to 2003 and became a TAC Executive Committee member in July 2004. Mohammad has chaired the commission's Documents and Forms Committee, its Training Committee, and its Quality Committee, and he was instrumental in writing

the outcomes-based criteria for both mechanical engineering technology and drafting/design engineering technology programs. Currently, Mohammad is serving as TAC's Chair for the 2008-2009 accreditation cycle.

In this role, Mohammad has been shepherding the commission through a period of conspicuous growth. He's been working with

the leadership from the other three ABET commissions to harmonize the criteria and the self-study questionnaires while ensuring that the distinctions that make TAC unique are retained. In addition, the commission had to prepare to send evaluators on its first non-U.S. accreditation visits this fall.

"Sometimes, it's difficult to keep all of the traditional activities going with so many new initiatives on the commission's collective plate," Mohammad said. "However, the team chairs, program evaluators, and I keep in mind the fact that we're doing all of this to help technology programs and ultimately students, both in the United States and now abroad. Knowing that we could have an impact on the continuous improvement of these programs is rewarding and makes our efforts worthwhile."



LookAhead

- Dec. 2 — Full registration fee deadline for Faculty Workshop on Assessing Program Outcomes, Phoenix, AZ
- Dec. 6 — Faculty Workshop on Assessing Program Outcomes, Phoenix, AZ
- Jan. 5-9 — Institute for the Development of Excellence in Assessment Leadership (IDEAL), Savannah, GA
- Jan. 16-18 — Commission Executive Committee Meetings, Baltimore, MD

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include guiding the organization as it has furthered international agreements, such as the Washington Accord for engineering accreditation, and worked to found new agreements, such as the Seoul Accord for computing accreditation. In addition, he has worked closely with several organizations to establish their own accrediting bodies, including those in Japan, Korea, Mexico, and Taiwan. He is also extremely knowledgeable about outcomes-based criteria, having been involved from the early days of the development of EC2000.

Peterson will work with the U.S. State Department, the World Bank, foreign governments and non-governmental organizations, and other entities to define and develop ABET's role as the global quality assurance organization.

ABET will maintain its responsibility for continuing accreditation for technological programs at U.S.-based institutions, as well as addressing global issues. The ABET Board of Directors and commissions are committed to providing an accreditation process that is of value to its institutions. As a result, ABET President **Joseph L. Sussman, Ph.D.**, has appointed a search committee to identify qualified candidates to succeed Peterson as Executive Director and lead the organization as it continues to fulfill its vision and mission.

Society of Fire Protection Engineers Approved for ABET Membership

At its fall meeting, the ABET Board of Directors approved an application from the Society of Fire Protection Engineers (SFPE) for admission as a Member Society of ABET.

Established in 1950, SFPE is the professional society representing those practicing the field of fire protection engineering. Its aims

include advancing the science and practice of fire protection engineering and its allied fields, maintaining a high ethical standard among its members, and fostering fire protection engineering education. Currently, SFPE has approximately 4,500 members worldwide and 57 regional chapters.

Admission into ABET requires a majority vote of the Board of Directors and the subsequent ratification by at least two-thirds of the governing boards of ABET's current member societies. If ratified, SFPE would become an ABET Member Society at the first Board meeting following its membership ratification.

Schall Becomes ABET Adjunct Training Director

Veteran ABET volunteer **Susan O. Schall, Ph.D.**, has taken a new professional position with the organization as its Adjunct Training Director. In this role, Schall will direct all activities related to program evaluator and team chair training and professional development, in cooperation with the ABET Accreditation Council Training Committee as well as members of the Accreditation and Professional Services staff at ABET headquarters.

As Adjunct Training Director, Schall's duties include preparing materials, selecting sites, and developing schedules for most volunteer training sessions. She will conduct the Train-the-Trainer sessions, which prepare facilitators to train program evaluator candidates, and participate in all facilitator and program evaluator candidate training sessions. She will also direct the preparation of and oversee program evaluator refresher and remediation training and work with ABET member society leadership to coordinate program-specific training. Perhaps most important, Schall is responsible for implementing annual updates and improvements into the training sequences and assur-

ing communication with member societies about all aspects of the training process.

Schall, who represented the Institute of Industrial Engineers on the ABET Board of Directors from 2005 to 2008, has served on the Partnership to Advance Volunteer Excellence (PAVE) Steering Team, the original PAVE Training Design Team, and the PAVE Training Work Group. In addition, she has been a lead facilitator for the program evaluator training for the last three years. Schall is President of SOS Consulting, LLC, a firm providing strategic process improvement consulting and training.

In Memoriam

1989-90 ABET President **Edward W. Ernst, Ph.D.**, passed away on Friday, November 14. An ardent supporter of engineering education, Ernst was Chair of the Engineering Accreditation Commission for the 1985-86 cycle and a director representing IEEE on the ABET Board of Directors during the 1980s. He received the Fellow of ABET Award in 1988 and then the Linton E. Grinter Distinguished Service Award in 1992. Ernst was a faculty member in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from 1958 until his retirement in 1989 and later served as the Allied Signal Professor of Engineering at the University of South Carolina.



Omission: Last month, we ran a list of new members to be seated on the 2008-2009 ABET Board of Directors, and we inadvertently omitted the new representative for the Institute of Industrial Engineers, Inc. — **K. Jamie Rogers, Ph.D., P.E.**, from The University of Texas at Arlington. We apologize for the error.

ABETOnline

- ▶ View the PowerPoint presentations from the 2008 ABET Annual Meeting at www.abet.org/annual.shtml.
- ▶ Download the PowerPoint presentations from the 2008 Commission Summit at www.abet.org/presentations.shtml.
- ▶ 2009-2010 accreditation criteria have been posted at www.abet.org/forms.shtml.

CommunityMatters™

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Assessment101

Assessment Tips with Gloria Rogers, Ph.D.

Common Definition of Terms Promotes Communication

In the Summer 2002 issue of this newsletter's predecessor,

Communications Link, I wrote an article about the importance of the language of assessment titled "The Language of Assessment: Humpty Dumpty Had a Great Fall..." Because this topic is important (and timely), some of that article is repeated here.

Without a common language, it is impossible to have meaningful conversations about any topic of importance regarding technological education. This couldn't be truer than when talking about assessment and data collection processes. There are a multitude of terms folded into the assessment process: goals, objectives, outcomes, metrics, indicators, performance criteria, standards, specifications, evaluation, etc. Unfortunately, there is no one right definition for these terms. They are often used interchangeably and, therefore, are a source of confusion within a faculty.

To have a "discourse community" among faculty where ideas and information is freely shared, there must be a common understanding of the language used. This implies the ability to communicate clearly about issues that matter most — especially student learning. A discourse community builds knowledge together and represents a knowledge community. Community members develop a particular way they talk about what they know. This knowledge can only be constructed through a common language and understanding of what that language represents.

Assessment and evaluation professionals have the same general mental models around the discipline of assessment but do not necessarily use the language of the discipline consistently in communicating those models to those outside the discipline.

Unfortunately, the language of assessment is not precise, and there is no one right way to define many terms associated with assessment. Because the terms are often used differently and sometimes interchangeably, the ability to communicate becomes strained and sometimes impossible. The danger is that faculty spend an inordinate amount of time debating which terms mean what... a pastime in which there are no winners. In the absence of a standardized language, it becomes difficult to communicate and

reach agreement on more substantive issues of assessment— assessing student learning.

In an effort to standardize the way the ABET community uses the language of assessment across the four commissions (applied science, computing, engineering, and technology) and, therefore, strengthen our ability to communicate, the Accreditation Council has standardized the terms used in Criteria 2 and 3 of the accreditation criteria. The new terms and definitions will be in effect beginning with the 2009-10 academic year. They are the following:

Program Educational Objectives

— Broad statements that describe what graduates are expected to attain within a few years after graduation.

Student Outcomes — Student outcomes describe what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time of graduation. These relate to the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that students acquire as they progress through the program.

Assessment — Assessment is one or more processes that identify, collect, and prepare data to evaluate the attainment of student outcomes and program educational objectives. Effective assessment uses relevant direct, indirect, quantitative, and qualitative measures as appropriate to the objective or outcome being measured. Appropriate sampling methods may be used as part of an assessment process.

Evaluation — Evaluation is one or more processes for interpreting the data and evidence accumulated through assessment processes. Evaluation determines the extent to which student outcomes and program educational objectives are being attained. Evaluation results in decisions and actions regarding program improvement.

These terms and common definitions will not only be helpful within a given program but will also enable colleagues across the technological disciplines to participate freely in the conversations about student learning.

YourCorner

Board of Directors

The Report to the Board from the ABET Board of Directors meeting, held in Louisville on November 1, is online at www.abet.org/board_report.shtml.

Commissioners

The Report to the Board from the fall ABET Board of Directors meeting is online at www.abet.org/board_report.shtml. The report includes any changes to the accreditation criteria and *Accreditation Policy and Procedure Manual*.

Institutions

This fall, the ABET Board of Directors approved for *second* reading the ASAC Proposed Program Criteria for Industrial Hygiene Programs and for Safety Programs as well as the TAC Proposed Program Criteria for Bioengineering Technology Programs and for Nuclear Engineering Technology Programs. These criteria will be implemented during the 2009-10 accreditation cycle.

The ABET Board approved for *first* reading the EAC Proposed Program Criteria for Bioengineering and Biomedical, Biological, Software, and Systems Engineering Programs. These criteria will be published for one year for review and comment. In addition, the ABET Board approved for first reading the ASAC, CAC, EAC, and TAC Proposed Harmonized General Criteria. These criteria will be published for two years for review and comment. The commissions invite your feedback on these proposed changes.

Member Societies

ABET will hold a webinar to review October's Society Summit on Thursday, December 11, at 1:30 p.m. EST. This webinar has been designed for those who could not attend the Summit, but those who attended are welcome, too.

Commission nominations are due this month. Nomination forms were e-mailed to all liaisons on October 16. If you did not receive the forms, contact Donna Clark at dclark@abet.org.

Program Evaluators

Thanks for all your efforts this fall! Don't forget to submit all expense reports with **original receipts to your team chair** and to complete your evaluations.

Member Societies

ABET is a federation of 29 professional and technical societies representing the fields of applied science, computing, engineering, and technology:

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| 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. | International Council on Systems Engineering |
| American Institute of Chemical Engineers | International Society of Automation |
| American Nuclear Society | Materials Research Society |
| American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers | National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying |
| American Society of Civil Engineers | National Institute of Ceramic Engineers |
| American Society for Engineering Education | National Society of Professional Engineers |
| American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc. | SAE International |
| American Society of Safety Engineers | Society of Manufacturing Engineers |
| ASME | Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration, Inc. |
| Biomedical Engineering Society | Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers |
| CSAB, Inc. | Society of Petroleum Engineers |
| | The Minerals, Metals, and Materials Society |



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