

CommunityMatters™

A Monthly Newsletter for the ABET Community

May 2009

Inside ABET

Society of Fire Protection Engineers Joins ABET

The Society of Fire Protection Engineers (SFPE), the professional society representing those practicing the field of fire protection engineering, is now a member of ABET.

Effective immediately, SFPE is a full-fledged ABET Member Society. ABET Member Societies hold seats on the accreditation commissions and have at least one voting representative on the ABET Board of Directors. In addition, Member Societies take lead responsibilities in program accreditation. For example, degree programs in fire protection will have to meet the general criteria set by the engineering or technology commission as well as any program-specific criteria that SFPE develops and ABET approves for its discipline. SFPE is responsible for recruiting and selecting program evaluators to review fire protection engineering programs.

The ABET Board approved the SFPE's admission as a Member Society during its November 2008 meeting. Two-thirds of the organization's Member Societies had to ratify SFPE's admission for the new society to be admitted. SFPE took its seat on the ABET Board of Directors for the first time during the body's spring meeting, on Saturday, March 28, in Baltimore.

The Society of Fire Protection Engineers was established in 1950 and incorporated as an independent organization in 1971. SFPE has approximately 4,500 members in the U.S. and abroad, as well as 57 regional chapters. The organization's stated purpose is to advance the science and practice of fire protection engineering and its allied fields, to maintain a high ethical standard among its members, and to foster fire protection engineering education.

With the addition of SFPE, ABET is now comprised of a total of 30 professional and technical societies.

Volunteer Spotlight

Bassem Armaly

Bassem F. Armaly, Ph.D., has been one of ABET's most active volunteers, choosing to get involved in everything from the Partnership to Advance Volunteer Excellence (PAVE) Steering Team to the Board of Directors Nominating Committee. But what else would you expect from someone who talks about how ABET has been such a great outlet for professional service?

Bassem, who is a Curators' Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the Missouri University of Science and Technology, admits that he first got involved with ABET for the same reasons that many others in academe do.

"I volunteered to become an ABET evaluator 21 years ago, when I was the chair of the department, to learn the details of the accreditation process and to make sure that our mechanical and aerospace engineering programs were meeting the ABET accreditation criteria," he said.

However, he enjoyed his work with ABET and continued as a program evaluator for five years before ascending to the Engineering

Accreditation Commission (EAC) during the 1990s. More recently, Bassem has been on the ABET Board of Directors representing ASME — as well as on many of the Board's committees — since 2003.

Currently, Bassem is Chair of the Board's Finance Committee. As such, he leads the body that is responsible for preparing the

annual budget for the next fiscal year each spring. Bassem has provided solid leadership in this position, helping ABET control operating costs and draft clear policies regarding the use of ABET funding. For example, he and the committee have been instrumental in revising the ABET travel policy so that it is

fair to all volunteers while maintaining sound financial control of the budget.

So, why has Bassem continued to take on so many different projects with ABET?

"I find that I am still learning because of the continuous improvement process that ABET employs, which has no ending," Bassem said. "These activities help me to strike the right balance among teaching, research, and service."



Look Ahead

- May 2-3 — Program Evaluator Training, Baltimore, MD
- May 15 — Deadline to Submit Feedback on Criteria Harmonization
- May 16 — Train-the-Trainer, Baltimore, MD
- May 18 — Hotel Registration Deadline for June 13 Faculty Workshop on Continuous Improvement Processes, Austin, TX
- May 30-31 — Program Evaluator Training, Baltimore, MD
- May 31 — Deadline to Submit Nominations for the Linton E. Grinter Distinguished Service Award, the Fellow of ABET Award, and the Claire L. Felbinger Award for Diversity

InsideABET

ABET Award Submissions Due Sunday, May 31

Each year, ABET invites its volunteers to nominate their colleagues for one of ABET's prestigious awards. Learn more about each of these unique opportunities below:

The Linton E. Grinter Distinguished Service Award

The Linton E. Grinter Distinguished Service Award is ABET's highest honor. Reserved for those ABET volunteers who surpass even the organization's highest service expectations, this award acknowledges truly remarkable contributions to the technical disciplines through work in ABET-related activities. Award recipients receive a prismatic crystal trophy and an accompanying framed certificate, and they are invited to accept the award during the black tie-optional ABET Awards Banquet.

The most recent Grinter winner is 2006 ABET President **Richard C. Seagrave, Ph.D.**, who received the honor in October 2008. His citation is a good example of the unwavering dedication that the award acknowledges: "For his outstanding, sustained, distinguished, and innovative leadership of first the Engineering Accreditation Commission and then the ABET Board of Directors at a time of radical change in ABET; his committed and diplomatic style assured an orderly transition to a performance, quality assurance-based method of accreditation."

ABET encourages any current or former volunteer to nominate an exceptional colleague for the Grinter Award.

The Fellow of ABET Award

The Fellow of ABET Award recognizes individuals who have given sustained quality service to the ABET-related professions, in general, and to education in the ABET disciplines, in particular, through the activities of ABET. To

date, 126 ABET volunteers have been inducted as Fellows for their contributions to specific projects or to overall ABET activities. The award includes a Fellow of ABET lapel pin and an accompanying framed certificate; both are bestowed during the black tie-optional ABET Awards Banquet, which takes place during the ABET Annual Meeting each October.

Last year, five notable individuals were inducted as ABET Fellows. An example of one of their citations read: "For his commitment of quality improvement in all aspects of ABET accreditation and for his leadership in development of an integrated and unified approach across all commissions."

Like with the Grinter Award, ABET invites any current or former volunteer to nominate an outstanding colleague for the Fellow of ABET Award.

The Claire L. Felbinger Award for Diversity

First bestowed as a special ABET President's Award in 2005, the Claire L. Felbinger Award for Diversity is now presented annually to recognize U.S.-based educational units, individuals, associations, and firms for extraordinary success in achieving or facilitating diversity and inclusiveness in the technological segments of our society.

One recent citation for this honor reads: "For the development and operation of a successful hands-on, project-based university campus summer program for underrepresented high school students and their teachers that increases awareness of information technology skills and careers and enhances the students' aspirations for a college education."

The Claire L. Felbinger Award for Diversity is presented annually during the luncheon segment of the Commission Summit, which precedes the ABET Annual Meeting every October. The award itself consists of a crystal awards bowl that sits on a wooden base with

a commemorative plaque. Nominations for this award are open to anyone, and self-nominations are welcome.

The deadline to submit nominations for all three of this year's awards is Sunday, May 31. Further information can be found at www.abet.org/awards.shtml.

CommunityMatters To Go Digital Only in the Fall

In an effort to be more environmentally conscious, ABET has decided to make this newsletter a digital-only document starting with the September 2009 issue. That means, if you still wish to receive the important information that this newsletter contains, you have to make sure that ABET has your current e-mail address.

If you have an account with a username and password, please go in and update your e-mail address as well as your other information promptly:

- ▶ If you are a program evaluator or team chair or have ever served as an evaluator, visit <http://main.abet.org/evaluator>.
- ▶ If you are from an institution but have never been an ABET volunteer, visit <http://main.abet.org/institution>.
- ▶ If you are from an ABET society, visit <http://main.abet.org/society>.

If you do not have a password, use the "forgot password" option on the log-in screen to retrieve your information and then update your account.



Apply now for the August 3-7 session of the Institute for the Development of Excellence in Assessment Leadership (IDEAL) in Baltimore at www.abet.org/ideal.shtml.

ABETOnline

- ▶ Apply for this summer's IDEAL at www.abet.org/ideal.shtml.
- ▶ Prepare your nominations for this year's Grinter, Fellow, and Felbinger awards: www.abet.org/diversity.shtml.
- ▶ Get your 75th Anniversary Retrospective Book at www.abet.org/order.shtml.

CommunityMatters™

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Assessment101

Assessment Tips with Gloria Rogers, Ph.D.

Continuous Improvement or Continuous Annoyance? Part One

There is a growing number of concerns about the ABET continuous improvement-based accreditation process as being both onerous and meaningless to program faculty. Why is there so much dissatisfaction with what some programs are experiencing with the accreditation process?

The current process came about as a result of complaints that the previous process was restrictive and used a “bean-counting” approach. The current process was touted as being more flexible and focused on quality while allowing programs to be innovative in how they designed their curricula and demonstrated compliance with the accreditation criteria. Sounds great, right? Where have things gone wrong? I would like to suggest one answer: We are making the process around criteria 2, 3, and 4 too difficult!

If we reflect on our experience as faculty and/or students, we remember what happened when there was an open-ended item on a test and the student didn’t know the answer. The student wrote and wrote, doing a “data dump” in hopes that the faculty member would find the answer somewhere or, at least, would give the student some credit. That is the way many programs are approaching the accreditation process.

Data collection machines (Rube Goldberg-type) are being developed in some programs that require every faculty member to collect data on every student in every course, creating a huge amount of overhead and squandering faculty time. It would almost be excusable if, when the data were “aggregated,” the program actually knew what the data meant. No wonder that there is dissatisfaction. In continuous improvement processes, more data are not necessarily better. What should we do?

There are two sides to the issue and both need to be worked at the same time. One side is what is happening with programs, and the other side is the expectation of evaluators. This article will deal with the program side of the issue, and next month’s article will deal with the evaluator side of the issue.

Here are what I believe are the areas that create the most problems for programs.

First, programs need to be sure that they have defined their outcomes into a few high-level indicators that will enable the programs to focus the data collection process and lead to meaningful evaluation of outcome achievement. If you haven’t defined the outcome, you cannot measure it with any reliability.

Secondly, programs need to be efficient about where data are collected. If we believe that the curriculum is cumulative and what students learn in one course they use in other courses (practice what they learned) and build on in other courses (take their learning to the next level), then understanding how the curriculum supports the achievement of the outcome is the key to developing efficient processes. Just because a program can identify five or six courses that support learning



related to the indicators developed for the outcome DOESN’T mean that data need to be collected in every course to understand whether students can demonstrate the outcome. As a matter of fact, to collect multiple data points on every student can actually confound the results and make evaluation less effective.

Lastly, programs don’t have to collect data on every outcome every year to understand achievement of PROGRAM outcomes. Faculty are encouraged to do whatever they can to improve individual courses; many of the processes that have been developed may be helpful to do that and that is to be applauded. However, program assessment is not about individual courses but the effectiveness of the curriculum. We need to move faculty away from thinking about “my” courses to “our” curriculum. How do courses work together to produce student outcomes by the time of graduation? To answer that question, for each outcome we can collect data in only one course where the performance is demonstrated (not always the senior project), we can collect data on a cycle that makes sense (every two/three years), and we don’t have to assess every student.

YourCorner

Board of Directors

Nominations for the 2009 Linton E. Grinter Distinguished Service Award, ABET Fellow Award, and Claire L. Felbinger Award for Diversity are still being accepted. The award nomination forms are available on the ABET website at www.abet.org/awards.shtml. The deadline for submission for all awards is Sunday, May 31.

Commissioners

Just a reminder that photos for the next *Commission Directory* are due on Friday, May 8! 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. 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. 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

Be sure your mentors are working with their PEV candidates. As your candidates complete their training, evaluations will be posted to your society ABET website within two weeks. This evaluation will allow you to determine their qualifications and approve them to become PEVs for your society.

Many of you will be planning your own meetings. If you need ABET materials for recruitment or to distribute to your members, please let us know.

Member Societies

ABET is a federation of 30 professional and technical societies representing the fields of applied science, computing, engineering, and technology:

American Academy of Environmental Engineers	IEEE, Inc.
American Congress on Surveying and Mapping	Institute of Industrial Engineers, Inc.
American Industrial Hygiene Association	International Council on Systems Engineering
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Inc.	International Society of Automation
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 Fire Protection Engineers
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
Health Physics Society	The Minerals, Metals, and Materials Society



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