NACEP Peer Reviewer Tips and Strategies

The accreditation process is a snapshot of the applicant program at a certain point in time. Everything needs to be in place and alignment with the standards needs to be clearly evident to you, the reviewers, when this snapshot occurs. Remember a lot happens during this process so please keep in mind these tips and strategies as you move forward.

First Steps:

- When reviewing don't let your perception of something different than your norm overshadow your objectivity, because other states have laws that affect certain decisions or actions. Also four-year institutions and two-year institutions often have different ways of operating.

- Strongly suggest each member of the review team screen the application using the review form, then use it to take notes on throughout the process. This documentation will be very helpful to the lead reviewer and will help keep the meetings focused instead of searching the application files.

- No one—regardless of experience—has all the answers or will catch all of the nuances of the application. Bring up all of your comments and observations during the review team calls and emails; this truly is a team effort in regard to observation, insight, and analysis.

- To help stay on track, re-read and digest the Accreditation Guide before review assignment notification date. Note your questions and issues and discuss them with your review team members as soon as possible. If a common understanding does not exist, contact your coordinating commissioner for clarification.

Program Description:

- The Program Description is an important reference document for the entire application. For example, in checking for required evidence in each discipline, it is essential to know how many, and what, disciplines there are.

- Listing information from the Program Description (e.g., number and names of disciplines, number of high schools, etc.) on your review form will be very handy and save you time.

- Often there are statements made on the Program Description that are relevant to individual standards, but are not repeated on the relevant Cover Sheet or other document within the individual standards folder. At the time you review the Program Description, it may be helpful for you to make a reminder note such as "see PD for info on XYZ" on the review form under the relevant standard, or to copy and paste the information into the discussion space for that standard.

- The same can be done for those documents relevant to one standard that end up elsewhere, as happens with almost every application. Making reminder notes on the review form under the appropriate standard will reduce searching and frustration.

The Standards and Evidence:

- The five standard clusters—curriculum, faculty, student, assessment, and evaluation, are interdependent. To be successful, the materials submitted by the applicant must cause the reviewers to conclude that all of the required NACEP standards have been integrated across all disciplines within the CEP.

- Try making columns on the Discipline Sheet and then put C1, C2, C3, F3, A1, A2, and A3 at the top. Use a checkmark to make sure you have the information you need for each standard listed.

- If a spread sheet is provided for documentation, request that it be provided in a form where it can be searched or sorted in different ways. Screen shots are usually not that useful.

- Even with integration across the disciplines, situations will occur that cause issues for accreditation. At this point the review team makes a judgment call. Things to look for in such instances include: Is this a substantive or a procedural issue? How serious and widespread is it? How long has it been going on? Has the CEP demonstrated strength and standard alignment overall? Has the applicant provided a reasonable explanation for the lapse? Have steps already been taken by the CEP and a timeline established to resolve the issue?

- Access the institution's website and see if the CEP material is easy to locate without the supplied links.

- Print the paired syllabi or assessments list to take notes on while you read through the syllabi or assessments to determine if A1, A2, & A3 are being met.

- When confusion arises over request for more documentation or evidence sometimes a phone call is the best way for everyone to understand what is being requested.

- The NACEP Survey Guide outlines several useful strategies to maximize response rates for the 4-year-out student survey standard. Oftentimes it is helpful for the review team to refer the applicant to this resource for future use.

- Although the NACEP Assessment Standard form can be used for several Standards, it is not the only piece of required evidence for any of them. If additional evidence does not seem to be in agreement with the signed standard form, we will want to ask for additional statements, explanations, and documentation to demonstrate that the applicant has an active system in place that reconciles these seeming incongruities.

Overall:

- The best applications anticipate where their processes differ from the NACEP norm, so to speak, and provide full and clear explanations as to how they implement an alternative way to achieve alignment with the NACEP standards. The more problematic applications are those that include statements such as "we are doing this" without providing any supporting documentation. In such cases the review team has to be respectful and understanding, but also must insist on documented evidence

Leads:

- The Lead needs to remember to ask each person for their input or opinion in order to develop a comfort level for the team, because sometimes new reviewers are hesitant to respond. That person may feel they have a lack of knowledge of the process or experience in reviewing.

- The Lead should not be the recorder, but instead everyone should take notes and then compile it together on one review sheet.

- The Lead and team must ensure that the Final Review and Recommendation Forms are as thorough as possible to support The Commission in making the best decision.