Accreditation Institute
Facilitator's Guide

Introduction

The Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA) of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) holds an annual Accreditation Institute, in conjunction with NASPAA's annual conference, to present educational sessions for academic program directors and faculty members who seek information about accreditation for master-level, public service degrees.

The individuals who attend the Accreditation Institute typically fall into one of four categories: individuals who desire to provide the leadership for their respective programs to become NASPAA accredited for the first time, individuals who desire to provide the leadership for their respective programs to become reaccredited, individuals who want to remain current on NASPAA standards for strategic program management and continuous program improvement, and individuals who are interested in becoming NASPAA site visitor volunteers.

The purpose of this document is to provide future facilitators of the Accreditation Institute with guidance on delivering effective training sessions to ensure that participants obtain the information needed to successfully guide their programs through accreditation or reaccreditation by writing meaningful self-study reports and to build the foundation of mission, goals, and objectives for strategic program management. The goal is not simply accreditation but rather continuous program improvement, which was discussed in depth throughout the 2022 Accreditation Institute.

This guide begins with an overview of the request for proposals before providing information on training structure, training communication, and training preparation of the 2022 Accreditation Institute. It then offers guidance on the training sessions, including facilitator tips for success. The guide concludes with an overview of the participant feedback from the 2022 Accreditation Institute.

It should be noted that this guide is based on the experiences of the 2022 Accreditation Institute, which was delivered in-person by one training facilitator on October 19, 2022, in Chicago immediately preceding the NASPAA Annual Conference. Future Accreditation Institutes may be organized and delivered differently; therefore, future facilitators may be expected to deliver the training sessions through one or more formats, including in-person, online, and hybrid. It also should be noted that the "*Facilitator Tips for Success*" contained within this document also are based on the 2022 Accreditation Institute.

Request for Proposals
COPRA issues a request for proposals (RFP) annually to ultimately select a qualified facilitator (or facilitators) for delivering a successful Accreditation Institute. The most recent RFP contained the following four sections: (1) overview, background, and goal, (2) scope of work, (3) intended audience, and (4) facilitator experience. There are two fundamental steps in being selected as the facilitator (or facilitators) of the Accreditation Institute.

First, the written proposal response must conform in all material respects to the requirements set forth in the RFP. The writer of the proposal response, as a result, is encouraged to review each section of the RFP in detail and to contact COPRA staff members for clarifying questions. Second, potential facilitators must convey their respective philosophy regarding their ability to successfully provide training sessions attended for adult learners. Therefore, each session must contain clear objectives to be accomplished, each session must be organized in a format to accomplish the respective objectives, and each session must conclude with a summary of the training objectives.

This type of written proposal response communicates to the proposal evaluators that the potential facilitator possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully toggle between the broader philosophical reasons of investing the time and energy of obtaining accreditation for the first time or becoming reaccredited and the details contained within each standard of writing a successfully self-study report. Another important aspect of being successful in the proposal submission and selection process is articulating to COPRA staff members the willingness to work as a partner with them on delivering a successful Accreditation Institute and the willingness to incorporate their suggestions and changes in building out the training deliverables. Their level of understanding regarding accreditation value, process, tools, and standards cannot be overstated during every step of the Accreditation Institute.

Training Structure
The RFP provided an overall structure of how the training sessions are typically organized and delivered. The 2022 Accreditation Institute was comprised of five in-person sessions, which each session running between 60 and 90 minutes in length. The design of these sessions within the institute's training structure was critically important for success. While each session contained independent learning objectives, the overall purpose of the 2022 Accreditation Institute of helping participants to understand the NASPAA accreditation process and to write a successful and meaningful self-study was the overarching thread that tied them together.

As stated in the RFP, potential facilitators are asked to focus on keys to writing a successful self-study report and to provide information on basis of judgement that COPRA uses as a starting point in reviewing self-study reports. The potential facilitators also must address the common problems when writing a self-study report and provide examples on how to overcome them, including the use of interactive pedagogical techniques for adult learners.

Training Communication

The overall communication strategy is extremely important to the success of the annual Accreditation Institute. While the COPRA staff members take the lead on promoting the Accreditation Institute, which includes information on the training agenda and sending out resources for the participants to review before attending the training sessions, the facilitator should be aware of these communication channels and the institute materials being received by the participants. This allows the facilitator to anticipate questions based on such materials and to refer to them during the training sessions. The post-accreditation institute feedback survey revealed that the participants were very pleased with how COPRA staff members communicated with them and prepared them for attending the Accreditation Institute (see table 1 in the appendix).

Training Preparation

One could argue that training preparation is the core of delivering a productive and meaningful Accreditation Institute. After the respective proposal response to the RFP was awarded for the 2022 Accreditation Institute, the facilitator and the COPRA staff members met to generally agree on what would be covered in the five training sessions as generally outlined in the RFP. The facilitator also reviewed the Accreditation Institute Facilitator's Guide from the previous year.

The meeting for the 2022 Accreditation Institute was extremely productive. For example, one concern was ensuring that participants would confront and understand the different requirements of Standard 1 (managing the program strategically) as compared to Standard 5 (student learning), which is a common source of confusion for programs. Another concern was to ensure that Standard 6 (resources) and Standard 7 (communication) received adequate airtime after following Standard 5 (student learning), which tends to demand a lot of attention from participants. The meeting also allowed the facilitator to ask questions, and more importantly, to hear the trends and gaps in standard implementation from COPRA staff members.

The next step was for the facilitator to prepare the training materials and to share them with the COPRA staff members, who provided excellent feedback based on their prior experiences with the annual Accreditation Institute. The facilitator should be prepared to

make changes to approximately 30 percent of the training materials, for example, which greatly improves the overall training layout. For example, the COPRA staff members requested that participants be referred to the basis of judgement for each standard throughout the training. Therefore, it was decided to include Appendix A: Rationale, Clarifying Examples, Basis of Judgement of the Self-Study Instructions as part of the training packet. The slides were then updated to contain the corresponding page numbers so that the Facilitator could reference the respective basis of judgement when presenting a specific standard during the training sessions.

Session One: NASPAA Accreditation and Strategic Program Management
The training objectives of this session were to review the value and process of accreditation, to outline the preconditions for accreditation readiness, to discuss the role of the site visit team, to discuss how COPRA makes its decision, and to present accreditation resources. Many of the training participants, especially for first-time attendees, were extremely interested in the eligibility phase, which includes the perquisite of becoming a NASPAA member and attending an accreditation institute, the submission of an eligibility application, and the understanding of COPRA's response of proceed to self-study, proceed with caution, or do not proceed.

This session then presented information on accreditation readiness, which includes having a logic model, a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan, and an assessment plan. This information was extremely valuable for both new programs and programs moving through reaccreditation. This session also provided much needed information on the purpose of the site visit, which includes on-the-ground program insight from a three-person site visit team to confirm and clarify information provided in the self-study report. However, the site visit teams do not make accreditation decisions, but rather collect evidence for COPRA's consideration in making the final accreditation determination.

Another important aspect of this session was explaining the types of decisions made by COPRA. They include accreditation with no monitoring, accreditation with monitoring, accreditation of one-year for additional information for programs seeking reaccreditation, accreditation deferral of one to two years for programs seeking initial accreditation, and denial of accreditation. The post-accreditation institute feedback survey revealed that the participants were very pleased with the information they received during this session (see table 5 in the appendix).

Facilitator Tips for Success

- Providing an overview of the entire training helps participants understand the connectedness of the five training sessions.

- Spending more time on the eligibility phase would be helpful for programs interested in accreditation for the first time.
- Spending more time on the role of the site visit team would be helpful given the number of questions received from this training objective.
- Showing the participants where to find the resource documents on NASPPAA's website was appreciated by the participants.

Session Two: Setting the Stage

The training objectives for this session, which focused on Standard 1, were to discuss the role of the program's mission, public service values, and outcomes, to present an example logic model, including how it is used for program evaluation and strategic program management, and to conduct an exercise on measuring program success. The following graph provides a visual overview of the first training objective, which begins with the critical step of having a mission statement of the program's purpose of existence within the context of its respective environment.

Mission

Public Service Value

Program Goals

Program Objectives

Program Outcomes

An ongoing example for each step also allowed the focus to remain on program goals and objectives rather than curriculum competencies required in Standard 5, responding to the reality that programs often have trouble distinguishing between these two standards. The training session then shifted to program evaluation, which requires programs to collect, apply, and report information about its performance and operations to guide continuous program improvement.

A major part of program evaluation, which is addressed in Standard 1.3, is the role of logic models and how they are used to make data-drive decision and to manage the program strategically. The following logic model was used as one of the examples, which

shows the connections between the program mission and public service values, program goals and objectives, and program outcomes and assessment.
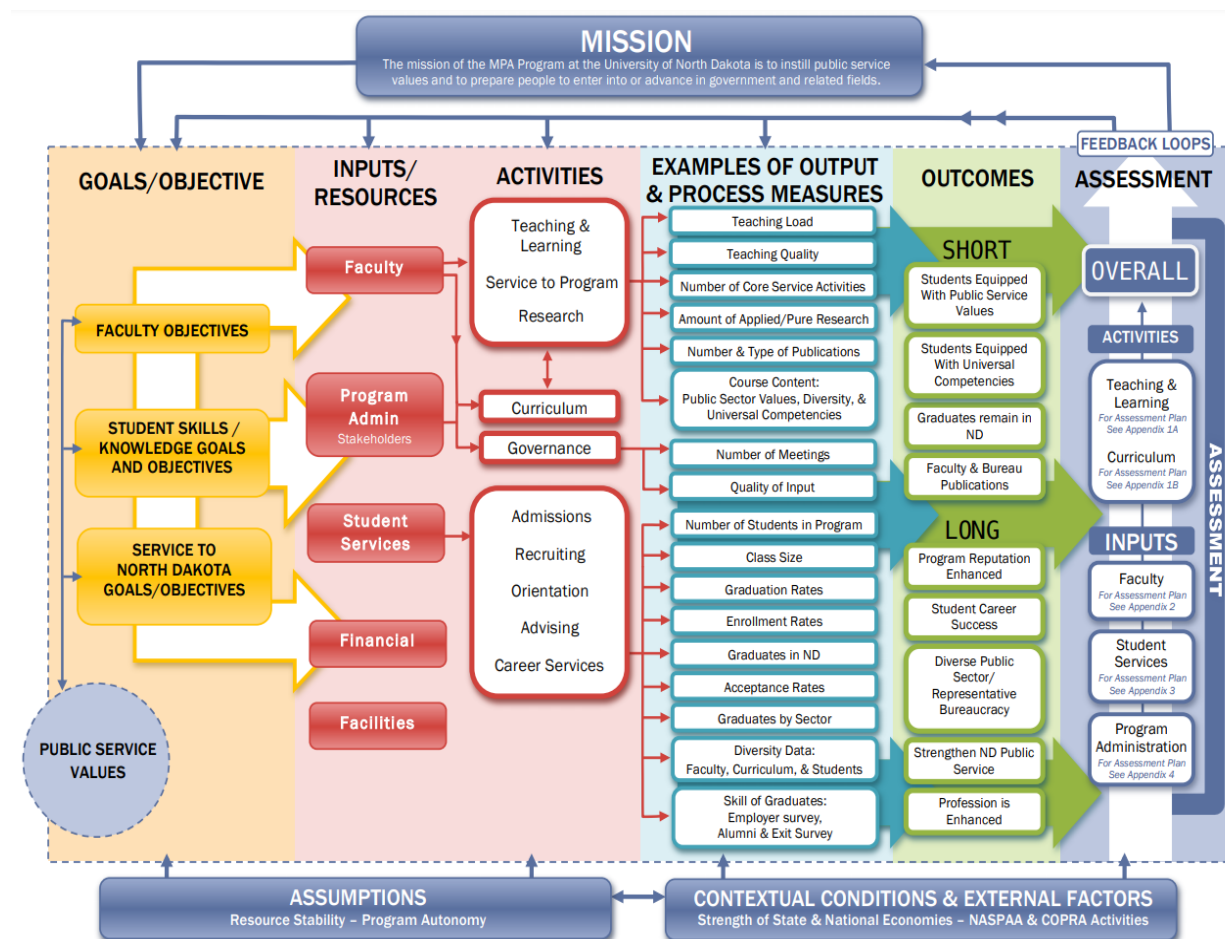
The role of continuous program improvement was presented in detail before concluding this session with an exercise on how programs are currently measuring their success through program outcomes. The post-accreditation institute feedback survey revealed that the participants were very pleased with the information they received during this session (see table 5 in the appendix).

Facilitator Tips for Success

- Spending a complete training session on Standard 1 provided much needed context for program success and for writing a self-study report.
- Providing an overview of the process for developing mission, goals, objectives, and outcomes, along with an example, was helpful to all participants.

- Discussing the difference between Standard 1 and Standard 5 was critically important to all participants; however, some programs still struggled with identifying program outcomes as noted during the exercise.
- Referring to the basis of judgement found within Appendix A of the handout when presenting a specific standard increased participant interaction and participant learning.
- Providing more examples of program outcomes would have helped participants contextualize how programs measure success around the program dimensions of faculty, staff, students, alumni, development, and diversity, equity, and inclusion based on participant feedback from the exercise.

Session Three: Addressing the Fundamentals

The training objectives for this session, which focused on Standards 2, 3, and 4, were to discuss the role of program governance and operations, highlighting areas that often challenge programs during the accreditation process and providing guidance for success, and to conduct an exercise on how programs promote student diversity and inclusion.

This session began by focusing on Standard 2.1 (administrative capacity) and Standard 2.2 (faculty governance). After providing the background on each standard, the challenges of providing adequate information on these standards were addressed. They included relying too heavily on the program director for administrative capacity and not providing adequate information on faculty governance that clearly shows substantial determining influence for the governance and implementation of program structure, performance, evaluation, and direction.

This session then addressed Standard 3.1 (faculty qualifications) and Standard 3.2 (faculty diversity). The focus on Standard 3.1 was providing adequate information on both being academically and professionally qualified before addressing Standard 3.2 of promoting equity, diversity, and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, retention, and support of faculty members. The participants were reminded that diversity, equity, and inclusion plans, which are required, must promote faculty diversity and how they promote an inclusive environment. Standard 3.3 (research, scholarship, and service) also was addressed, including how programs should promote both traditional scholarship activities along with professional and community service activities.

The four parts of Standard 4 were then addressed. They included Standard 4.1 (student recruitment), Standard 4.2 (student admissions), Standard 4.3 (support for students), and Standard 4.4 (student diversity). One approach to connecting these four standards is that program must promote equity, diversity, and a climate of inclusiveness through its

recruitment and admissions practices, retention efforts, and student support services. The participants were reminded, parallel to faculty diversity, that diversity, equity, and inclusion plans, which are required, must promote student diversity and how they promote an inclusive environment. Therefore, this training session was concluded with an exercise on how programs promote diversity and inclusiveness. The post-accreditation institute feedback survey revealed that the participants were very pleased with the information they received during this session (see table 5 in the appendix).

Facilitator Tips for Success

- Moving through the standards in a linear and in-depth format was appreciated by adult learners.
- Referring to the basis of judgement found within Appendix A of the handout when presenting a specific standard increased participant interaction and participant learning.
- Providing information on how to overcome some of the challenges embedded within these standards when writing a self-study report was well-received.
- Providing information on the differences between academically and professionally qualified was well-received, including how this program dimension is connected to the program's mission statement.
- Discussing the move from diversity plans to diversity, equity, and inclusion plans needed more attention based on participant feedback from the exercise.

Session Four: Closing the Loop

The training objectives for this session, which focused on Standards 5, 6, and 7, were to present an approach to measure curriculum-based competencies, to discuss transparency requirements of resource adequacy and communications, and to participate in an exercise on how programs demonstrate a full assessment cycle with competency data.

This session began by focusing on Standard 5 (universal required competencies), which requires that programs adopt a set of required competencies related to its mission and public service values as the basis of its curriculum. The session then turned to identifying and measuring competencies, which included understanding the context for identifying curriculum-based competencies through the program's mission and public service values and identifying student learning outcomes to measure each respective competency. After the student learning outcomes are identified, the program must decide where the student leaning outcomes are measured, what type of instruments are used to measure them, and how they are assessed.

The following table contains the example used in this training session. As shown, the student must complete different instruments (reflective paper, research paper, and case) for demonstrating competency of the three respective learning outcomes. Grading rubrics are then used to assess the student's attainment of them. The discussion was extremely important because course grades cannot be used to report on competency obtainment, which is a common mistake made by programs when writing the self-study report.

Competency	Student Learning Outcome	Where measured	What is used	How assessed
To lead and manage in public governance	Critique own personal model of leadership	Leadership course	Reflective paper	Grading Rubric
	Analyze organizations and their environments from multiple perspectives	Organizational Theory Course	Research paper	Grading rubric
	Understand how to collaborate across boundaries to build strategic relationships	Introduction Course	Case	Grading rubric

The training then turned to the assessment cycles, where programs must be able to demonstrate how student learning outcomes are assessed, provide evidence that learning was gathered and analyzed, and more importantly, how this evidence was used to implement curriculum changing for closing the loop. One complete assessment cycle must be included in the self-study report, with two additional assessment cycles being required as part of the site visit.

COPRA staff members articulated, as mentioned previously, that they did not want to overlook the critical role of program resources and communication during training preparation. Therefore, this session provided detailed information on Standard 6.1 (resource adequacy), where programs must have sufficient funds, physical facilities, and resources in addition to their faculty members to pursue its mission, goals, and objectives. In addition, programs must provide contextual information within the self-study report on how this standard is related to Standard 2.1 (administrative capacity), Standard 4.3 (student support), and other relevant standards.

This session also provided in depth information on Standard 7.1 (communications), where programs must provide appropriate and current information about their missions, policies, practices, and accomplishments – including student learning outcomes – sufficient to inform decisions by their respective stakeholders. Part of this requirement is to communicate student data on initially enrolled students, graduating withing identified time lengths, and total students persisting to graduation. In addition to reporting on these data in the self-study report, this information must be included on the program's website for communication and transparency. The post-accreditation institute feedback survey revealed that the participants were very pleased with the information they received during this session (see table 5 in the appendix).

Facilitator Tips for Success

- Referring to the basis of judgement found within Appendix A of the handout when presenting a specific standard increased participant interaction and participant learning.
- Communicating the reason for a competency-based curriculum, in addition to the process of identifying student learning outcomes, was a major value-add for the participants.
- Discussing how student learning outcomes are assessed outside of the grading process was appreciated by the participants.
- Providing information on how program resources are communicated to stakeholders beyond the accreditation process provided excellent context for the importance of this standard.
- Providing information on program communications within the context of transparency was a productive way for emphasizing the critical role of this standard.
- Providing different approaches to measuring competencies beyond the approach presented herein would have helped the participants based on participant feedback from the exercise.

Session Five: Site Visitor Training

The training objectives for this session were to orient potential site visitors to the NASPAA accreditation process, to provide an overview of the site visit, and to discuss next steps for the site visitor readiness. After the first training objective was completed, an in-depth discussion was managed by the facilitator on the role of the site visit. It was extremely helpful to have other site visitors in the room to help articulate the value of being a site visitor and to respond to the numerous questions from the participants. They

also provided value when discussing how to write a meaningful site visit report, which is a critical part of the accreditation process.

Facilitator Tips for Success

- Spending more time on the purpose of the site visit would have helped the participants based on the questions received.
- Providing some writing examples from a site visit report would have helped explain this responsibility of the site visit team.
- Having other site visitors in the room is a value add, which provided different perspectives on serving in this critical role of accreditation.

Evaluation

The appendix contains the quantitative feedback from the participants of the 2022 Accreditation Institute on 24 questions grouped into six categories, which included preparation for the Accreditation Institute, accreditation standards, self-study report, accreditation value and process, session feedback, and training delivery. Each category was then followed by space for open-ended responses.

Table 1 shows that participants were pleased with preparation for the Accreditation Institute, which was referred to earlier in this guide and was managed by the COPRA staff members. Without question, these materials set the tone for a successful Accreditation Institute.

Table 2 shows that participants were pleased with the information that they received on the accreditation standards, which was clearly supported by the qualitative feedback from the participants. As stated by one of the participants, "the presentation of the standards was very clear and informative."

Table 3 shows that the participants were overall pleased with the information that they received on the self-study report; however, more information on practical solutions to organizing, data gathering, and writing a successful self-study report was needed. One participant noted on the evaluation that more examples were needed on how to demonstrate in the self-study report that the respective program is meeting the specific standards of accreditation.

Table 4 shows that the participants were overall pleased with the information they received on accreditation value and process; however, several participants provided qualitative feedback on how to improve this area of the Accreditation Institute. Some

wanted more information on the specific value of investing the resources to obtain accreditation. Others wanted more information on hosting a successful site visit.

Table 5, which has been referred to several times in this guide, shows that participants were pleased with the information they received within each session of the Accreditation Institute. One area that needs attention in future Accreditation Institutes is more information on competency assessment as noted in the qualitative feedback.

Table 6 then confirms that participants were overall satisfied with the different dimensions of training delivery, including that approximately 85 percent of the respondents would recommend the Accreditation Institute to other programs of master-level public service degrees.

Conclusion

The purpose of this guide, as stated in the introduction, is to provide future facilitators of the Accreditation Institute with guidance on delivering effective training sessions to ensure that participants obtain the information needed to successfully guide their programs through the accreditation process by writing meaningful self-study reports. With that said, the information contained within this document should be approached as recommendations rather than a roadmap to success.

While future facilitators may adopt selected approaches to the training sessions as described herein, they also will need to adapt selected approaches based on their own strengths of training adult learners and their own understanding of the seven standards, including the challenges often faced by programs in responding to them.

The writer of the proposal response to the annual RFP also must articulate the overarching tread that ties the respective training sessions together, which is to write a successful self-study report. This approach sets the stage for the larger context of becoming NASPAA accredited, which provides a reliable and trustworthy indication of value and quality to all stakeholders of the respective master-level programs of public policy, affairs, and administration.

Appendix

Table 1
Preparation for the Accreditation Institute

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NA	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
1A. The accreditation website (including videos) was up to date regarding the Accreditation process (if you did not review the website or videos, select NA).	2.33% 1	0.00% 0	9.30% 4	39.53% 17	48.84% 21	43	3.68
1B. The accreditation website (including videos) helped me feel prepared for the AI (if you did not review the website or videos, select NA).	2.33% 1	2.33% 1	13.95% 6	27.91% 12	53.49% 23	43	3.45

Table 2
Accreditation Standards

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NA	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
2A. The AI provided clear information about the Accreditation Standards.	0.00% 0	2.27% 1	34.09% 15	61.36% 27	2.27% 1	44	3.60
2B. The AI provided useful tools to reduce the chance that our program will be monitored on one or more Standards.	0.00% 0	9.09% 4	38.64% 17	50.00% 22	2.27% 1	44	3.42
2C. The AI provided solutions to frequent problems in addressing the Standards.	0.00% 0	11.36% 5	40.91% 18	45.45% 20	2.27% 1	44	3.35

Table 3
Self-Study Report

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NA	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
3A. The AI provided tools to use in developing an SSR.	0.00% 0	9.30% 4	37.21% 16	51.16% 22	2.33% 1	43	3.43
3B. The AI addressed historically problematic aspects of developing the SSR.	0.00% 0	9.30% 4	41.86% 18	46.51% 20	2.33% 1	43	3.38
3C. The AI provided practical solutions to the problematic aspects of SSR development.	0.00% 0	11.63% 5	34.88% 15	48.84% 21	4.65% 2	43	3.39

Table 4
Accreditation Value and
Process

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NA	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
4A. The AI provided a clear description of the value of Accreditation.	0.00% 0	9.30% 4	27.91% 12	60.47% 26	2.33% 1	43	3.52
4B. The AI provided useful information about the Accreditation timetable.	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	25.58% 11	72.09% 31	2.33% 1	43	3.74
4C. The AI provided solutions to the problematic aspects of the Accreditation process.	0.00% 0	13.95% 6	34.88% 15	48.84% 21	2.33% 1	43	3.36
4D. The AI provided useful information on the role of the site visit team.	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	34.88% 15	60.47% 26	4.65% 2	43	3.63

Table 5
Session Feedback

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NA	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
5A. Session 1, NASPAA Accreditation and Strategic Program Management, provided useful information.	2.38% 1	0.00% 0	35.71% 15	59.52% 25	2.38% 1	42	3.56
5B. Session 2, Setting the Stage: Standard 1 Mission, Values, and Outcomes, provided useful information.	2.38% 1	0.00% 0	33.33% 14	64.29% 27	0.00% 0	42	3.60
5C. Session 3, Addressing the Fundamentals: Standards 2, 3, and 4, Governance and Operations, provided useful information.	2.38% 1	2.38% 1	28.57% 12	66.67% 28	0.00% 0	42	3.60
5D. Session 4, Closing the Loop: Standards 5, 6, and 7, Competencies and Transparency, provided useful information.	2.38% 1	4.76% 2	33.33% 14	59.52% 25	0.00% 0	42	3.50

Table 6
Training Delivery

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NA	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
6A. Information was provided in effective ways.	0.00% 0	4.76% 2	38.10% 16	54.76% 23	2.38% 1	42	3.51
6B. Facilitators were well-informed on issues related to accreditation.	2.38% 1	0.00% 0	19.05% 8	78.57% 33	0.00% 0	42	3.74
6C. Participants had opportunities to ask questions.	2.38% 1	0.00% 0	21.43% 9	76.19% 32	0.00% 0	42	3.71
6D. Participants were actively engaged.	2.38% 1	9.52% 4	26.19% 11	61.90% 26	0.00% 0	42	3.48
6E. A diversity of voices was heard.	4.76% 2	11.90% 5	19.05% 8	64.29% 27	0.00% 0	42	3.43
6F. Follow-up activities were identified to encourage participants to use what we learned.	2.38% 1	11.90% 5	28.57% 12	50.00% 21	7.14% 3	42	3.36
6G. The agenda was well designed.	4.76% 2	7.14% 3	28.57% 12	59.52% 25	0.00% 0	42	3.43
6H. I would recommend the Accreditation Institute to a colleague from my program or another program.	2.44% 1	7.32% 3	17.07% 7	68.29% 28	4.88% 2	41	3.59