NASPAA ACCREDITED
The Commission on Peer Review & Accreditation

NASPAA 2018 ACCREDITATION INSTITUTE

SESSION	DESCRIPTION	FACILITATOR
8:15am – 9:00am	Holistic Strategic Management: Vision, Mission & Goals	Charles E. Menifield, PhD

SESSION DESCRIPTION: NASPAA is the global standard in public service education. NASPAA expects an accredited program to be explicit about the public service values to which it gives priority; to clarify the ways in which it embeds these values in its internal governance, and to demonstrate that its students learn the tools and competencies to apply and to take these values into consideration in their professional activities. In this session, member institutions use their program's vision to develop mission, value and goal statements to strategically examine the institutional context, faculty assets, and curriculum design to manage program growth and advance program quality. The goal of the "Holistic Strategic Management" session is to develop a clear strategic vision that describes your program's long-term and short-term plans to create bold and relevant learning opportunities for your graduate degree program. You should bring your mission statements as well as any accrediting documents that would help you frame your plan for advancing or solidifying your standing in the field. For NASPAA members who attend this session, we will use your vision and mission statements to set the direction of your program, discuss the challenges that program directors face in their institutional climate and describe your ability to make strategic choices and programmatic changes to promote public service values within your graduate degree program.

STANDARD 1 Managing the Program Strategically

1.1 Mission Statement: The program will have a statement of mission that guides performance expectations and their evaluation, including • its purpose and public service values, given the program's particular emphasis on public affairs, administration, and policy • the population of students, employers, and professionals the program intends to serve, and • the contributions it intends to produce to advance the knowledge, research, and practice of public affairs, administration, and policy.

1.2 Performance Expectations: The program will establish observable program goals, objectives, and outcomes, including expectations for student learning, consistent with its mission.

1.3 Program Evaluation: The program will collect, apply, and report information about its performance and its operations to guide the evolution of the program's mission and the program's design and continuous improvement with respect to standards two through seven.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS SESSION:

- Revisit your vision and mission statements?
- Determine if your vision statement includes public service values and an engagement strategy?
- Determine if your mission statement aligns with the vision statement for your program?
- Determine if your program goals and objectives align with vision and mission of your program?
- Assess your resources and determine if they are sufficient in order to reach your goals and objectives?
- Determine if your goals translate to desired performance measures? In other words, are they SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely)?

RELEVANT RESOURCES:

Molina, A. D., & McKeown, C. L. (2012). The heart of the profession: Understanding public service values. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 375-396. Retrieved from http://www.naspaa.org/JPAEMessenger/Article/VOL18-2/09_MolinaMcKeown.pdf

Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement. John M. Bryson. 2018. John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ.

10 Steps to Successful Strategic Planning. Susan Barksdale. 2006. ASTD, Danvers, MA.

University of Connecticut. (n.d.) *How To Write a Program Mission Statement*. Retrieved from http://web2.uconn.edu/assessment/docs/HowToWriteMission.pdf

University of Massachusetts - Amherst. (2001, Fall) Program-Based Review and Assessment: Tools and Techniques for Program Improvement. Office of Academic Planning and Assessment. Retrieved from https://naspaaaccreditation.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/program_based-umass.pdf

WORKSHEET FOR CREATING A HOLISTIC STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION: [Ex. Excellence in public service education]

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PROGRAM MISSION:

STRATEGIC GOALS:

Standard 1: Managing the Program Strategically
Standard 2: Matching Governance with the Mission
Standard 3: Matching Operations with the Mission: Faculty Performance
Standard 4: Matching Operations with the Mission: Service Students
Standard 5: Matching Operations with the Mission: Student Learning

PROGRAM GOALS:

MEASURABLE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES: [Ex. Increase diverse student applications 10% each year]

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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Strategic Planning: SWOT

Internal and External
Strengths
Weaknesses
Opportunities
Threats/Challenges

When completing the analysis, consider the following subjects: Student Population, Diversity, Concentrations, Administrative Staff, Number of Faculty and their Expertise, Campus Standing, National Standing, Growth in the Area, Political Connections, Competition from other Programs, Financial Resources, Alumni Network, Donor Base, Possible Collaborations with other programs, Mandates and a Readiness Assessment.

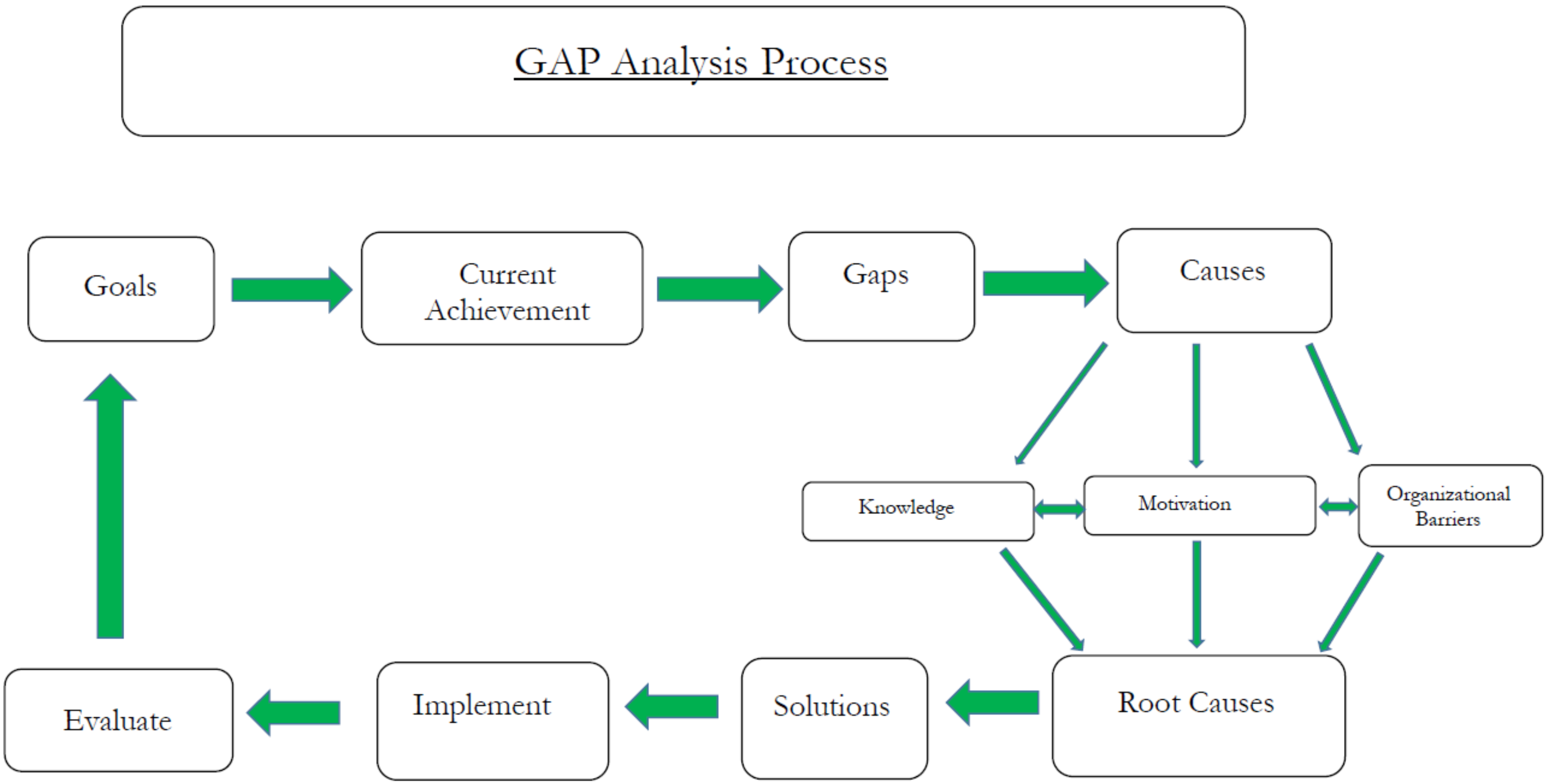
Strategic Planning: Connecting Strengths and Weaknesses to Opportunities and Threats

SWOT		**Internal to the Program**	
		Strengths 1. 2 3	Weakness 1. 2. 3.
External to the Program	Opportunities 1. 2. 3.		
	Threats 1. 2. 3.		

Task: Link your Strengths to your Opportunities and Threats. Link your Weakness to Opportunities and Threats.

GAP Analysis

GAP Analysis Steps	Example	Your Example
1. Challenge	65% of MPA students graduate within 4 year period.	
2a. Organizational Goal	Program wants 100% of students to graduate within a 4 year period.	
2b. Stakeholder Goal	Staff: Want students to follow the plan of study.	
3. Current Achievement Status	The difference between the problem and goal is 35%. Through observations and document analysis we found that students are often working and taking care of family member. As a result they drop courses.	


GAP Analysis Process
Goals
Current Achievement
Gaps
Causes
Knowledge
Motivation
Organizational Barriers
Root Causes
Solutions
Implement
Evaluate

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SESSION	DESCRIPTION	FACILITATOR
9:00AM – 10:00AM	Program Evaluation	Jade Berry James, PhD

SESSION DESCRIPTION: The goal of the session is to connect the mission statement and observable performance expectations with program evaluation – to collect, analyze and use information to continuously improve your graduate degree program. For every NASPAA member who attends this session, we review how you strategically manage your program through the development of the mission statement, performance expectations and program evaluation. In this session, you review your mission statement and your program goals as well as describe your ability to make strategic choices and programmatic changes that promote public service values in your graduate degree program. As you think about the program's performance expectations, we will discuss how you analyze the relationship between program curriculum and student competency. Distinguishing between course- and program-level outcomes is as important as your approach to measuring learning outcomes. How you promote diversity in your curriculum and a climate of inclusion among faculty and students is also an important focus for this session.

STANDARD 1 Managing the Program Strategically

1.1 Mission Statement: The program will have a statement of mission that guides performance expectations and their evaluation, including • its purpose and public service values, given the program's particular emphasis on public affairs, administration, and policy • the population of students, employers, and professionals the program intends to serve, and • the contributions it intends to produce to advance the knowledge, research, and practice of public affairs, administration, and policy.

1.2 Performance Expectations: The program will establish observable program goals, objectives, and outcomes, including expectations for student learning, consistent with its mission.

1.3 Program Evaluation: The program will collect, apply, and report information about its performance and its operations to guide the evolution of the program's mission and the program's design and continuous improvement with respect to standards two through seven.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS SESSION:

- Are your program goals consistent with the mission of your program?
- Do your goals align with public sector values and the vision for your program?
- In order to reach your goals and objectives, have you thought about how long it would take and what resources does your program needs?
- Do your goals describe desired performance? In other words, are they SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound)?

RELEVANT RESOURCES:

Molina, A. D., & McKeown, C. L. (2012). The heart of the profession: Understanding public service values. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 375-396. Retrieved from http://www.naspaa.org/JPAEMessenger/Article/VOL18-2/09_MolinaMcKeown.pdf

University of Connecticut. (n.d.) *How To Write a Program Mission Statement*. Retrieved from http://web2.uconn.edu/assessment/docs/HowToWriteMission.pdf

University of Massachusetts - Amherst. (2001, Fall) Program-Based Review and Assessment: Tools and Techniques for Program Improvement. Office of Academic Planning and Assessment. Retrieved from https://naspaaaccreditation.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/program_based-umass.pdf

SESSION PROGRAM EVALUATION: MISSION STATEMENT WORKSHEET

Describe the purpose of your graduate degree program:

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What are the public service values promoted in your graduate degree program?

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What areas of public service does your program emphasize?

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Whom does your program serve? Where is your program's service area?

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What contributions does your program, graduate students or alumni make to the public sector? To the private sector? To the nonprofit sector?

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ADOPTION, MODIFICATION AND REVIEW WORKSHEET

When was your mission statement adopted, modified and reviewed? And, by whom?

Date Adopted: ____

Development and Review Process

Faculty: ____

Students: ____

Alumni: ____

Employers: ____

Internship Supervisors: ____

Advisory Council: ____

University Stakeholders: ____

Discuss your review process. Is it annual? Only during accreditation?

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Date Revised, Following Review: ____

Where can you find your program's mission statement? University Website? Student Handbook? Course Syllabi? Student Orientation Materials? New Faculty Orientation Materials? Program Newsletter? Program Stationary? On University/Program SWAG? Faculty Email Signature?

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DIVERSITY WORKSHEET: DIVERSITY PLANNING AND STRATEGIES

Mission of Institution:

Vision of Institution:

Values of Institution:

Strategic Planning & Diversity Initiatives:

School/Department/Program Diversity Plan

I. **Accreditation Standards**

- **Standard 3.2 Faculty Diversity:** The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and retention of faculty members;
- **Standard 4.4 Student Diversity:** The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, admissions practices, and student support services; and
- **Standard 5.1 Universal Required Competencies:** To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

II. **Description of Department**

- Describe academic degree programs in the department as well as the mission of the program
- Identify academically and professionally qualified program faculty as well as resources to support diversity

III. **Diversity Curricular and Co-curricular Commitments**

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Standard 3 Matching Operations with the Mission: Faculty Performance | 3.2 Faculty Diversity: The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and retention of faculty members.

Faculty Diversity Goal

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FACULTY DIVERSITY	Strategy	Initiative	Evaluation of Effort
Recruitment			
Advertising			
Retention Practices			
Campus Climate			
Informal/Formal Mentoring			
Funding			

Standard 4 Matching Operations with the Mission: Serving Students | 4.4 Student Diversity The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, admissions practices, and student support services.

Student Diversity Goal:

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STUDENT DIVERSITY	Strategy	Initiative	Evaluation of Effort
Recruitment			
Financial Support			
Outreach			
Campus Climate			
Admission Practices			
Support Services			

Standard 5 Matching Operations with the Mission: Student Learning | Student Learning Goal: The MPA program will prepare students to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

Student Learning Goal:

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STUDENT LEARNING	Strategy	Initiative	Evaluation of Effort
Curriculum			
Problem Based Learning			
Internships			
Service Learning Projects			
Student Competitions			
Semester Abroad/Spring Break Activity			

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SESSION	TITLE	FACILITATOR
10:15 am – 11:45am	Student Learning Assessment	Jade Berry James, PhD

SESSION DESCRIPTION: The goal of the "Student Learning Assessment: Fundamentals" session is to discuss sustainable assessment approaches used to identify what students have learned and experienced in your program. Your assessment plan flows from your mission and program goals. By linking your program objectives to student learning outcomes, your program faculty will see how program resources, activities and initiatives contribute to the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and awareness (KSA^3) of students who graduate from your program. To close the loop, you use your assessment findings to help faculty make decisions about the impact of your program – your programmatic achievements speak to the quality of your program. Your assessment findings provide credible evidence to make strategic changes in your graduate degree program. For every NASPAA member who attends this session, we will connect your program mission and goals, to objectives and student learning competencies. Your goal is to develop a realistic and sustainable student learning assessment plan.

STANDARD 5.1 Universal Required Competencies:

> As the basis for its curriculum, the Program will adopt a set of required competencies related to its mission and [to] public service values. The required competencies will include five domains: the ability: • to lead and manage in public governance; • to participate in and contribute to the public policy process • to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions; • to articulate and apply a public service perspective; • to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

CRITICAL STEPS IN THE STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROCESS

- Operationalize the required Universal Competencies in ways that align with your mission, goals, and curricular focus. These student learning outcomes (SLOs) should be clear, appropriately rigorous, linked to the Universal Competency Domains in observable ways.
- Evaluate where competencies are addressed in your courses (curriculum map).
- Determine the artifacts (student work) that will be assessed and develop a timeline for the assessment. Common examples: capstone projects; student portfolios; course papers and exam questions; internship reports; theses. You may use a sample; provide your sampling methodology.
- Decide when each competency will be evaluated (make your assessment plan sustainable). There is no prescribed schedule - once every 3 years is reasonable. Once every 7 years is not.
- How many universal competencies should you assess? Current expectations are at least three.
- Develop rubrics or other evaluation guides that align with the student learning objectives (your operationalized competencies) and that faculty can apply to the review of the artifacts.
- Determine performance goals. Initially you may wish to "set to baseline" and then decide on expected longitudinal improvement. Do not use grades (i.e., everybody gets at least a B). This broad performance expectation does not provide the detail you need to obtain formative data.
- Decide on a process for analyzing results, communicating results to stakeholders, and identifying needed programmatic changes based on results.

The activities above will comprise your assessment plan. COPRA requires a written assessment plan.

BEST PRACTICES IN STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

- Multiple measures – direct and indirect.
- Use rubrics or other assessment tools. Do not use grades. They are not “formative” – they do not give you specific criteria for areas where students need to improve.
- Validity: Faculty (or other stakeholders) who have not taught the course assess the student work.
- Reliability: Two or more faculty reviewing common work.
- Achievement of performance targets: If your program finds that students are not meeting targets, the temptation is to change the targets or the process rather than reflecting on what substantive changes should be made to curriculum, pedagogy, or the like, based on the evidence you found. While some “process” changes may be appropriate, the bulk of changes should be substantive.
- Use of results: Align your program changes with the evidence you found. Sometimes programs discuss changes they’ve made without specific reference to the assessment process. Sometimes they talk about changes and reference assessment data but a close look at the assessment data reveals no linkage to the changes made.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS SESSION:

- Do you understand how to create a sustainable assessment strategy for your graduate degree program?
- Is your assessment plan realistic, given your program realities? Your program’s self-study timeframe?
- Does your assessment strategy include the collection of direct measures as well as indirect measures?
- Is your assessment plan sustainable, with a SMART Program Goals and Objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) identified?
- Do your program resources support your assessment processes? Have you identified an assessment committee? Did you charge the committee?
- Are you following best practices in student learning assessment?

RELEVANT RESOURCES

Association of American Colleges & Universities. (n.d.) Value Rubric Development Project. https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. Eastern New Mexico University Student Learning Assessment Plan/Report Academic Units 2010-2011 Template, Retrieved http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/ENM_Program%20Assessment%20Plan%20Report%20Template.pdf

Powell, David C., Michelle Saint-Germain, and Linda-Marie Sundstrom. (2014). Using a Capstone Case Study to Assess Student Learning on NASPAA Competencies. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 20(2), 151-162., https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15236803.2014.12001779?needAccess=true

University of Massachusetts - Amherst. (2001, Fall) Program-Based Review and Assessment: Tools and Techniques for Program Improvement. Office of Academic Planning and Assessment. Retrieved from https://naspaaaccreditation.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/program_based-umass.pdf

NOTE: See the UMASS Amherst Program-Based Review and Assessment document for varied course-embedded assessment, portfolio evaluations, scoring rubrics and performance assessment examples.

WORKSHEET FOR STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

PROGRAM MISSION:

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MEASURABLE PROGRAM GOAL: "What faculty believe should be characteristic of program graduate"

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SMART PROGRAM OBJECTIVE: "Specific learning behavior that the student should demonstrate"

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Keys to Assessment Planning	Important Questions
Assessment Methods	By what measure(s) will you know that students are meeting departmental learning objectives?
	From whom, and at what points, will you gather data?
	How will you collect the assessment information?
Assessment Processes	When will you conduct the assessment?
	Who will be responsible for each component?
	What is the overall timeline for the assessment plan?

Excerpt from University of Massachusetts - Amherst. (n.d.) Program-Based Review and Assessment: Tools and Techniques for Program Improvement. Office of Academic Planning and Assessment. Retrieved from https://naspaaaccreditation.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/program_based-umass.pdf, pp.

- **Part C: How does the program use evidence about the extent of student learning on the required (or other) competencies for program improvement?**

Universal Required Competencies: One Assessment Cycle

For the self-study narrative, the program should describe, for one of the required universal competencies, one complete cycle of assessment of student learning. That is, briefly describe 1) how the competency was defined in terms of student learning; 2) the type of evidence of student learning that was collected by the program for that competency, 3) how the evidence was analyzed, and 4) how the results were used for program improvement. *Note that while only one universal required competency is discussed in the self-study narrative, COPRA expects the program to discuss with the Site Visit Team progress on all universal competencies, subject to implementation expectations in COPRA's official policy statements.*
1. Definition of student learning outcome for the competency being assessed:
2. Evidence of learning that was gathered:
3. How evidence of learning was analyzed:
4. How the evidence was used for program change(s) or the basis for determining that no change was needed:

Assessment Matrix: Linking Objectives to Curriculum

Key
I = Introduced
E = Emphasized
U = Utilized
A – Comprehensive Assessment

	Course Numbers										
Objectives	115	351	370	495							
Communicate effectively in writing and speech	I	U	E	A							
Apply discipline specific theory and principles											

adapted from Diamond, R. M. Designing and assessing courses and curricula *(1998).*

Assessment Matrix: Linking Objectives to Data Gathering Tools

Key
I = Indirect Methods
D = Direct Methods

Objectives	**Enrollment Trends (OIR)**	**Senior Survey (OAPA)**	**Capstone Assignment**	**Focus Groups with Students**
Apply scientific method			D	I
Work as professional in field		I	D	

Examples of Assessment Approaches Available

Data	Assessment Tool	Who or What is Analyzed?	What Can Be Assessed?
Self-reports	classroom assessment focus groups interviews phone surveys/interviews reflective essays surveys (home-grown or standardized)	alumni employers enrolled students faculty graduating students entering students off-campus supervisors parents staff	*Perceptions about:* campus climate perceived learning evaluate processes value-added educational outcomes attitudes values
Achievement Tests	test score analysis content analysis scoring rubrics	competitions embedded questions on exams locally developed exams oral thesis defenses oral exams, recitals standardized tests	mastery and knowledge of principles, skills value-added
Observations	case studies observations	campus events (sports, theater) classes club meetings faculty offices fieldwork sites student services offices	attitudes campus climate interactions processes services student involvement student learning
Student Academic Work	content analysis scoring rubrics	capstone course products homework papers portfolios presentations, performances publications research reports term papers, theses videotapes	mastery and knowledge of principles, skills values processes value-added
Campus Documents	course x program objectives matrix course assignment x program objectives matrix content analysis analysis of forms	administrative units departments programs student services offices course syllabi, etc. student transcripts	accuracy cohesion/consistency efficiency structure for promoting objectives processes

SAMPLE

Program Assessment using Course-Based Assessment/Portfolio Review

	Entry Level (Volition): Student shows aptitude	**Evolving (Learning):** Student shows progress		**Accomplished (Performance):** Student demonstrates ability	
	Beginning (1)	**Developing (2)**	**Intermediate (3)**	**Proficient (4)**	**Distinguished (5)**
Analyze organizations and their environments from multiple perspectives and apply that analysis in assessing alternative courses of action[1]	Is aware of the internal and external forces at play in organizational decision making.	Recognizes basic and obvious internal and environmental factors that influence decision making and courses of action.	Recognizes complex internal and environmental factors that influence decision making and courses of action. Is able to identify and describe in detail the internal and environmental factors impacting organizations.	Recognizes complex internal and environmental factors that influence decision making and courses of action in a multi-faceted, grey context. Applies different frames (i.e., structural, cultural, procedural, motivational) to organizational diagnostics.	Recognizes complex internal and environmental factors that influence decision making and courses of action in a multi-faceted, grey context and identify cross-relationships among those factors. Uses multi-frame organizational diagnostics to help the organization decide on and implement a course of action.

NASPAA Accreditation
Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility Process

- **Who is eligible for NASPAA accreditation/are there any prerequisites for seeking NASPAA Accreditation?**
  - To be eligible for NASPAA accreditation, your program must be a master's degree in public affairs/policy/administration (or similar title denoting a professional master's degree preparing students for professional careers in public service). Your program must be a member in good standing of NASPAA and your home institution should be regionally or nationally accredited or be recognized by the equivalent quality assurance body in your country. Usually programs should be in operation for at least a four year period before seeking NASPAA accreditation in order to provide the sufficient data required to complete a review. Programs that have not been in operation for at least four years must provide a rationale as to the sufficiency of program data to support an evaluation. NASPAA accreditation is awarded at the master's program level only, not at the school or institutional level. Programs should also have a core faculty of at least 5 full-time faculty members, or their equivalent.
- **How does my program become a NASPAA member?**
  - To be eligible for NASPAA accreditation, your program must be a member in good standing of NASPAA. Details about NASPAA membership, including the membership application and due structure, may be found here.
- **When do I have to notify NASPAA that my program wishes to seek accreditation?**
  - For NASPAA member programs, NASPAA has an Eligibility process that programs must go through prior to submitting their Self Study for an accreditation review. The eligibility application itself serves as the notice of intent to pursue NASPAA accreditation. The application must be submitted in its entirety, along with the eligibility fee. The application will not be considered without these items. Eligibility applications are accepted twice annually, August 1 and April 1. If the program receives a recommendation to proceed to accreditation review, the earliest it could submit a self-study would be the next upcoming August 15 deadline. Non-US applicants should submit applications by the earliest possible deadline before their desired self-study year to allow for additional administrative review time.
- **How do I complete the Eligibility application?**
  - The Eligibility Application, like the subsequent Self-Study Report, is completed using the NASPAA Data Center, NASPAA's online database. Instructions can be found here.

- **How do I gain access to the NASPAA Data Center?**
  - If you are a program representative at a NASPAA member school, please contact drudy@naspaa.org or gregory@naspaa.org to gain access.
- **What are public service values?**
  - Public service values are important and enduring beliefs, ideals, and principles shared by members of a community about what is good and desirable, and what is not. They include pursuing the public interest with accountability and transparency; serving professionally with competence, efficiency, and objectivity; acting ethically so as to uphold the public trust; and demonstrating respect, equity, and fairness in dealings with citizens and fellow public servants. NASPAA expects an accreditable program to define the boundaries of the public service values it emphasizes, be they procedural or substantive, as the basis for distinguishing itself from other professional degrees.
- **My program is only 32 hours — am I ineligible to apply for accreditation?**
  - The normal expectation for students studying for professional degrees in public affairs, administration, and policy is equivalent to 36 to 48 semester credit hours of study…Programs departing from campus-centered education by offering distance learning, international exchanges, or innovative delivery systems must demonstrate that the intentions of this precondition are being achieved and that such programs are under the supervision of fully qualified faculty. This determination may include, but is not limited to, evidence of faculty of record, and communications between faculty and students.
  - For programs based outside of the United States, the equivalency of the 36-48 credit hours is expected, given the context of higher education in that country.
- **Is it possible to waive the eligibility process?**
  - Yes, in special circumstances COPRA may choose to waive the eligibility application. Examples include a university with currently accredited programs seeking accreditation for an additional, closely related degree program.
- **If my program is seeking reaccreditation, do I need to fill out the eligibility application?**
  - No! The application is for first-time applicants only.

Accreditation Process

- **How do I complete the Self-Study Report?**
  - The SSR is completed using the NASPAA Data Center, NASPAA's online database. Instructions can be found here. The Self-Study Instructions serve as the template for the Self-Study Report, including qualitative questions and data requirements, as well as rationale, bases of judgment and examples for each Standard. The Self-Study Instructions can be found here.
- **How do I gain access to the NASPAA Data Center?**

- If you are a program representative at a NASPAA member school, please contactdrudy@naspaa.org or gregory@naspaa.org to gain access. You may also request access online at naspaa.civicore.com.

- **When is the Self-Study Report due?**
  - For programs that have gone through the Eligibility process and have decided to move forward with applying for accreditation self-study reports are due for submission to NASPAA on August 15, immediately following their self-study year. Programs may request a late submission (September 1) but will be required to pay a late submission fee (See Schedule of Fees).
- **How do I know my accreditation cohort? My self-study year?**
  - Your accreditation cohort is the year preceding your accreditation expiration date. The cohort year is reflected on the Roster of Accredited Programs. Your self-study year, the year for which you will collect data, is the year directly preceding your cohort year. For instance, if your accreditation is through August 31, 2018, your accreditation cohort is 2017-18, your self-study year is AY 2016-2017, and your Self-Study is due August 15, 2017 (immediately after your self-study year).
- **How do I determine my self-study year?**
  - Your self-study year is the academic year (Fall-Spring-Summer) directly preceding the due date of your Self-Study Report. The self-study year is the academic year immediately preceding your cohort year, which is reflected on the Roster of Accredited Programs. (For initial applicants, your cohort year begins with your August 15 submission). For instance, if your accreditation is through August 31, 2018, your accreditation cohort is 2017-18 (with your Self-Study due August 15, 2017), and your self-study year is AY 2016-2017.
- **What is SSY-1? SSY-5?**
  - These years represent data collection years in the Self-Study Instructions and NASPAA data collection forms (specifically, the annual maintenance report). SSY-1 is the year before your Self-Study Report (used for employment rates). SSY-5 is five years prior to your self-study year (used for graduation rates).
- **What are the (re)accreditation fees?**
  - The Fees page details the exact requirements. Generally, before program-specific add-ons, initial accreditation costs $5,620 and septennial reaccreditation costs $4,587. Accredited programs also pay a $393 annual accreditation fee. Programs are also expected to reimburse the cost of their site visit. Accreditation fees are in addition to NASPAA membership dues.
- **How much does a typical site visit cost?**
  - While this can vary based on your location and travel costs particular to your region, a typical site visit (in the United States) costs between $2000 and $3000. Programs are encouraged to minimize costs by securing hotel rooms at university-based hotels. Please contact NASPAA staff for more information on hosting a site visit outside of the United States.
- **Who is my COPRA liaison?**

- Your COPRA liaison is your primary reviewer, and a resource throughout the accreditation cycle, available to answer any questions about your application and the process after the Self-Study Report. Your interim report will indicate who is serving as your COPRA liaison.

- **How long does my program's accreditation period last?**
  - This depends on your accreditation decision. For a program who has not delayed and is reaccredited, the standard period is 7 years. One-year reaccreditations and voluntary delays change this period, as noted in the final decision letter.
- **What are the accreditation deadlines?**
  - Member programs have the option of applying for eligibility each year on either April or August 1. The Self-Study Report is due August 15 of each year. Programs seeking initial accreditation may not both apply for eligibility and submit the Self-Study Report in the same calendar year. Site Visits take place during the spring of each cohort year, and COPRA decision letters are available by the end of July.
- **When will I receive my decision letter?**
  - Decision letters will be posted to The Data Center by the end of July. Hard copies are also mailed to the program and the university provost at this time.
- **How many NASPAA programs are accredited?**
  - As of September 2014, 184 programs are accredited, in 3 countries.
- **Can I delay my accreditation expiration?**
  - Programs are welcome to request a one-year delay. The Commission votes on all requests. While a program is granted a delay, it remains in the same cohort, and the maximum period of reaccreditation is for 6 years, instead of 7. Typical reasons for delay are periods of major restructuring, turnover in leadership, and natural disasters.
- **What is a roadmap of the process?**
  - Accreditation is essentially a strategic planning process. The mission and goals of a program, as articulated in Standard 1, guide how it approaches each of the six other standards. By engaging in strategic planning, programs can articulate how they approach governance, diversity, hiring, recruiting, student support, resources, communications, and most importantly student outcomes assessment and program evaluation, in the support of their mission.
  - More specifically, programs need to ensure that they are prepared to articulate conformance with each of the standards, and that they have been engaging in ongoing assessment. Programs should be able to provide an implemented logic model, assessment plan, and diversity plan.
- **What documents are available as resources?**
  - The NASPAA website includes the Resources section, intended to link programs with all necessary resources. Accreditation is guided by several official documents: NASPAA Standards, Self-Study Instructions, Policies and Procedures, and the Site Visit Manual. COPRA also publishes annual policy statements, which document the evolution of COPRA interpretations.

- **Who is eligible for NASPAA accreditation/are there any prerequisites for seeking NASPAA Accreditation?**
    - To be eligible for NASPAA accreditation, your program must be a master's degree in public affairs/policy/administration (or similar title denoting a professional master's degree preparing students for professional careers in public service). Your program must be a member in good standing of NASPAA and your home institution should be regionally or nationally accredited or be recognized by the equivalent quality assurance body in your country. Usually programs should be in operation for at least a four year period before seeking NASPAA accreditation in order to provide the sufficient data required to complete a review. Programs that have not been in operation for at least four years must provide a rationale as to the sufficiency of program data to support an evaluation. NASPAA accreditation is awarded at the master's program level only, not at the school or institutional level. Programs should also have a core faculty of at least 5 full-time faculty members, or their equivalent.
- **When do I have to notify NASPAA that my program wishes to seek accreditation?**
    - For NASPAA member programs, NASPAA has an Eligibility process that programs must go through prior to submitting their Self Study for an accreditation review. The eligibility application itself serves as the notice of intent to pursue NASPAA accreditation. The application must be submitted in its entirety, along with a letter of intent signed by the chief academic officer of the institution, and the eligibility fee. The application will not be considered without these items. Eligibility applications will be accepted twice annually, August 1 and April 1. If the program receives a recommendation to proceed to accreditation review, the earliest it could submit a self-study would be the next upcoming August 15 deadline. Non-US applicants should submit applications by the earliest possible deadline before their desired self-study year to allow for additional administrative review time.
- **If my program has gone through the Eligibility process and did not get a favorable recommendation can we still apply for NASPAA accreditation?**
    - Eligibility determinations by COPRA are advisory to the program seeking accreditation. The Eligibility process is intended to provide direction, directly from COPRA to programs interested in accreditation, on ways they may improve their prospects of receiving accreditation. The applicant program is given initial feedback on its application from the Commission and may decide to proceed to the self-study process, if the program chooses.
- **When will my Site Visit be after I have submitted a Self-Study Report?**
    - Programs that have submitted a Self-Study Report to COPRA for initial review at the August 15 deadline typically host their Site Visit in the Spring of that academic year. Site visits take place between January and April depending upon when the program, its administrators, and the Site Visit team can schedule a visit. COPRA provides program-specific recommendations, using the Interim Report, about whether a program should proceed to site visit. Initial applicants

with concerns in their interim reports often opt to delay the site visit for one year to better prepare.

Standard 1

- **How often should my program review its mission?**
  - There is no specific expectation for mission review. COPRA expects programs to engage in ongoing program evaluation, which will naturally allow programs to review and consider its mission and whether or not programs are meeting mission-based goals.
- **What if my mission hasn't been revised in many years?**
  - COPRA does not expect programs will change their missions from year to year, but instead looks for evidence that programs are routinely reviewing the mission's ongoing alignment with the program's goals and outcomes.
- **Should stakeholders be involved in the process?**
  - Yes! COPRA looks for evidence that programs have consulted with various stakeholder groups — both internal and external — when developing and reviewing its mission. By involving these stakeholders, programs ensure they are meeting the needs of their faculty, students, and employers.
- **How do you engage faculty? Stakeholders?**
  - Engaging stakeholders is a crucial aspect of the accreditation process. COPRA looks for evidence that programs are engaging not only their faculty and students, but their alumni, employers, and community. Faculty are often involved in most aspects of program governance: strategic planning and policy decisions, mission review and development, curriculum, hiring, student advising, teaching, etc. External stakeholders are intended to supplement internal efforts and provide an outside perspective on the program. Employers are valuable consumers of the program's "product" – its students – and can speak to the competencies the field expects of successful hires. Alumni are invested in the quality of the degree, and can identify areas where the program did and did not support them post-graduation. Bringing stakeholders together on a regular basis can facilitate a human capital investment in the future of the program.
- **What is the role of an advisory board?**
  - An advisory board can play whatever role best supports the program and its mission. As the name suggests, this is typically an advisory role — on mission, curriculum, student placement, competency definitions, etc. Programs are increasingly involving their advisory boards in assessment processes. An advisory board is not required by COPRA, but many programs have found them useful.
- **What is a logic model?**
  - A logic model is a visual representation of the program evaluation process. It helps programs articulate their thought processes about how the program

evaluates whether it is achieving its mission. It is a graphic display that illustrates the way that program resources flow into the activities of the program and produce a series of outcomes and impacts that feed into assessment process, all framed by the program mission.

- **Aren't Standards 1.3 and 5.1 the same?**
    - Standard 1.3 deals with *overall* program evaluation, depicted in the program's logic model, whereas Standard 5.1 deals with student learning outcome assessment, one piece of overall program evaluation.
- **Does COPRA require a strategic plan? What about a written program evaluation plan?**
    - Standard 1.2 requires that programs establish observable program goals, objectives, and outcomes, including expectations for student learning, consistent with its mission. Standard 1.3 requires programs to collect data on its performance relative to the mission. While COPRA does not require programs to provide strategic plans or program evaluation plans, many programs have found it useful to document the process whereby performance expectations are established and program performance is assessed.

Standard 2

- **Can any of my five nucleus faculty be professionally qualified?**
    - Yes! Standard 2.2 requires that programs maintain a core faculty of 5 faculty members employed full-time by the institution. These faculty members can be either professionally or academically qualified. The Basis of Judgment for Standard 3.1, in the Self-Study Instructions, states, "one way to demonstrate that a program's faculty members meet this standard is if at least 75% of nucleus faculty are academically qualified to pursue the Program's mission."
- **Does a faculty nucleus member have to teach full-time in only my program?**
    - No! Standard 2.2 requires that programs maintain a core faculty of 5 faculty members employed full-time by the *institution*. Joint appointments are common, but programs should ensure that faculty nucleus members are exerting substantial determining influence over the program. Programs should define, in the Self-Study Report, what it means to be a nucleus faculty member with substantial determining influence (i.e. faculty responsibilities), in their context.
- **Does COPRA require a program director?**
    - The normal expectation is for the program to have an identifiable director who provides an appropriate focus of attention, direction, and accountability. COPRA looks for evidence that programs have leadership and administrative capacity to function and support their mission.

Standard 3

- **In my executive education program, professionally qualified, non-nucleus faculty teach many courses — is that allowed?**
    - COPRA recognizes that different programs will have different strategies to meet their missions. In some situations, it may be appropriate for a program to articulate why the normal expectations of the Commission do not support the mission of the program. The program must demonstrate to COPRA how the faculty distribution supports its mission.
- **I have a diversity plan, but my faculty do not appear diverse — is this an issue?**
    - The program should demonstrate its overt efforts to promote diversity, cultural awareness, inclusiveness, etc., in the program, as well as how the program fosters and supports a climate of inclusiveness on an on-going basis in its operations and services. In addition to the required diversity plan, the Commission seeks substantial evidence regarding programmatic efforts to promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness, specifically demonstrable evidence of good practice, a framework for evaluating diversity efforts, and the connection to the program's mission and objectives.
- **Do academically qualified faculty have to hold a PhD?**
    - Not always. The definition of academically qualified requires that a professor hold a terminal degree related to his or her teaching responsibilities, and has remained current in the field. Typically this is translated as a PhD, but increasingly different disciplines are represented in NASPAA programs. For instance, if you have a JD teaching an administrative law class, the terminal degree would appear related to the teaching responsibility. As always, the program should articulate why policies, including operating criteria for academically qualified faculty, align with the mission of the program
    - For programs based outside of the United States, the context of what constitutes a terminal degree may be different and COPRA will expect the program to articulate how its policies regarding academically qualified faculty align with both its mission and higher education context in the country.
- **What makes a faculty member professionally qualified?**
    - Professionally qualified faculty members generally hold a related graduate degree and have relevant professional experience to his or her area of responsibility. Programs should define how they operationalize their policy for employing professionally (and academically) qualified faculty.
- **Can my program employ adjuncts?**
    - Of course! Professional programs can be strengthened by use of current practitioners, who augment the program's mission and are available to serve as adjuncts. For accreditation, programs should be able to articulate how the makeup of their faculty supports the mission, and ensure the distribution of courses meets COPRA's normal expectations for at least 50 percent of courses delivery required competencies being naught by qualified nucleus faculty, as well as 50 percent of all courses taught by full-time faculty.

- **My state/country does not allow information on diversity to be collected – how does this impact my accreditation?**
  - COPRA is sensitive to the legal contexts in which programs operate. If a program cannot legally collect, and provide, certain data points, the program should articulate its context for the Commission. With the case of diversity, the program should demonstrate its overt efforts to promote diversity, cultural awareness, inclusiveness, etc., in the program, as well as how the program fosters and supports a climate of inclusiveness on an on-going basis in its operations and services. The Commission seeks substantial evidence regarding programmatic efforts to promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness, specifically demonstrable evidence of good practice, a framework for evaluating diversity efforts, and the connection to the program's mission and objectives, regardless of its ability to track data.
- **I'm outside of the United States, how do the diversity standards apply to me?**
  - COPRA continues to evaluate diversity efforts against the context of the program itself, allowing programs based in different geographic locales and regions to be sensitive to local diversity issues and concerns. Programs are expected to provide program- and mission-specific diversity plans that detail strategies to promote faculty, student, and curricular diversity and foster an overall climate of inclusiveness.
- **Does my program have to have its own AQ/PQ policy or can it mirror NASPAA's?**
  - COPRA articulates its threshold for expectations in Self-Study Instructions Glossary, and expects programs to operationalize their policies for academically and professionally qualified faculty members. The program should articulate a systematic approach to ensuring current faculty, and new hires, are qualified to teach within the program. For instance, what is considered current for an academically qualified professor? How does the program determine what constitutes relevant professional experience for professionally qualified faculty?

Standard 4

- **I have a diversity plan, but my students do not appear diverse — is this an issue?**
  - The program should demonstrate its overt efforts to promote diversity, cultural awareness, inclusiveness, etc., in the program, as well as how the program fosters and supports a climate of inclusiveness on an on-going basis in its operations and services. The Commission seeks substantial evidence regarding programmatic efforts to promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness, specifically demonstrable evidence of good practice, a framework for evaluating diversity efforts, and the connection to the program's mission and objectives.
- **My state/country does not allow information on diversity to be collected – how does this impact my accreditation?**

- As with Standard 3.2, COPRA is sensitive to the legal contexts in which programs operate. If a program cannot legally collect, and provide, certain data points, the program should articulate its context for the Commission. With the case of diversity, the program should describe for the program how it ensures a climate of inclusiveness, regardless of its ability to track data.

- **Does COPRA prescribe any admissions criteria?**
  - No. COPRA looks for evidence that a program's admissions criteria are mission-based, are implemented consistently, and are designed to ensure a qualified and productive pool of students – who are prepared for the rigors of the curriculum – enrolling in the program.
- **Do we have to offer an internship?**
  - Not necessarily. Standard 5.4 requires programs to demonstrate how their students are exposed to, and learn, professional competencies. Most programs use an internship as a central part of their approach. However, depending on the mission of the program and its students, an internship may not be the best approach. For instance, many executive education programs (or tracks) do not require an internship, instead offering other supplemental experiences to their experience as students.
- **I'm outside of the United States, how do the diversity standards apply to me?**
  - COPRA continues to evaluate diversity efforts against the context of the program itself, allowing programs based in different geographic locales and regions to be sensitive to local diversity issues and concerns. Programs are expected to provide program- and mission-specific diversity plans that detail strategies to promote faculty, student, and curricular diversity and foster an overall climate of inclusiveness.
- **My program is small — is it okay that the majority of student support services are provided by the department/college/university?**
  - COPRA understands the varying needs and situations of programs depending on their institutional context. However, COPRA does expect to see that the program is meeting the needs of its students — whether advising or career-based. If it seems that students are not taking advantage of available services, or struggling to secure internships or graduate in a timely manner, COPRA may ask the program to address how it can better support the needs of its students.

Standard 5

- **How do you combat faculty fatigue due to assessment?**
  - This is something with which all programs struggle. The best way to ensure faculty remain engaged in the process is to use the data. Data collection perceived as meaningful and to serve and improve the program is much less tiresome. Another way to lessen the burden on faculty members is to pull other groups into the assessment process. Think about how your program can take

advantage of capstone clients, an advisory board, internship advisors, etc., as stakeholders who could also be engaged in student assessment.

- **Do course syllabi for the same course, but taught by different faculty, need to match?**
  - No! Successful assessment for NASPAA focuses on student competencies instead of curricular specifics. However, if two faculty members teach the same course with different approaches, and students from these courses demonstrate different levels of competency, then COPRA would expect the program to use its assessment processes to identify opportunities for growth to ensure that all students are successfully gaining mission-based competencies.
- **Can my assessment be based on indirect measures?**
  - Strong assessment plans will incorporate multiple types of measures: both direct and indirect. COPRA expects programs to rely predominantly on direct measures of student learning to assess whether students have mastered the competencies, using indirect measures to supplement the direct evidence.
- **Can I use a capstone or portfolio to assess student competencies?**
  - Of course! Many programs have formed successful assessment processes incorporating assessment of a culminating student experience – a capstone or portfolio, for instance. Programs also use pre/post tests, comprehensive exams, embedded course experiences, experiential exercises, etc. – both written and oral, and many other combinations of direct measures. There is no one way that works for all programs!
- **Does COPRA require a full assessment cycle on each of the 5 universal competency domains?**
  - COPRA Policy Statements articulate the implementation expectations of the 2009 NASPAA Accreditation Standards, by cohort.
- **What is a direct measure?**
  - A direct measure is an explicit demonstration of student learning, often measured against a rubric. Examples include: capstones, exams, reports, case studies, simulations, white papers, etc.
- **My program has 5 concentrations — what does COPRA require me to do with them?**
  - COPRA's current approach to program specializations (Standard 5.3) is to ensure programs are practicing truth in advertising, with regard to concentrations, and other aspects of specialization quality (e.g. adequacy of course offerings, quality of faculty). (COPRA Policy Statement, December 2013). COPRA does not expect programs to have fully-developed assessment systems in place for their concentrations at this time.
- **Does COPRA require a written student learning assessment plan?**
  - Yes, the program should provide its plan for assessing student mastery of the five Universal Required Competencies.
- **What are the components of a strong assessment plan?**
  - An assessment plan typically includes the strategies underlying the assessment of student learning outcomes, as well as the program's approach to programmatic improvement. A successful assessment plan typically details direct

(and indirect, as needed) measures, the use of rubrics for evaluation, faculty and stakeholder involvement, analysis procedures, and how analysis is used for overall program improvement.

- **How often should my program assess the universal competencies?**
  - The Basis of Judgment for Standard 5.1, Self-Study Instructions, states, "An accredited program need not assess all competencies every year or cohort, but rather at a frequency appropriate for its mission and goals. However, assessing each competency only once during a seven year accreditation cycle would not likely be sufficient for conformance in most programs." The sustainability of an assessment schedule depends on the mission of the program, its structure, and capacity.
- **Does my program have to assess each student, or is a sample of students okay?**
  - Sampling is an effective tool for large programs to use when determining if students have mastered program competencies.

Standard 6

- **How can accreditation help articulate resource needs?**
  - While the NASPAA Standards have few input requirements, the Standards do provide programs the opportunity to engage in strategic planning and articulate the resources needed to successfully meet their mission and goals. Further, NASPAA site visit teams typically meet with program stakeholders to discuss support for accomplishing goals. At the most basic level, the Standards require every program have at least 5 nucleus faculty members.
- **Why does COPRA care about my program's budget?**
  - COPRA is interested in a program's sustained ability to meet its mission and engage in ongoing development. For instance, if a program indicates that it is struggling to provide appropriate support services to students and faculty, COPRA will look to resource stability as a potential cause for any issues.

Standard 7

- **What information must I share publicly?**
  - COPRA Policy Statements and the Self-Study Instructions provide a window into COPRA's expectations in this regard. Apart from articulating standard program details (mission, faculty, admissions criteria, tuition, learning outcomes, etc.), the NASPAA Standards also require programs to showcase student achievement data, including graduation rates, employment rates, and recent internships.
- **Why does COPRA care what is on my program website?**
  - COPRA is committed to public accountability, and ensuring that stakeholders – specifically students – have the information needed to make informed decisions

about programs. The NASPAA School Search supports this effort as well, allowing students to compare NASPAA programs. On top of this, NASPAA-COPRA is a CHEA-recognized accreditor; CHEA expects all accreditors to require programs to share outcomes data publicly.

- **I don't have control over my program's website — what should I do?**
  - Many programs encounter structural obstacles when maintaining a current website. To be in conformance, however, programs must find ways to work with their IT departments. Thinking about the requirements of Standard 7, and establishing a consistent process for updating the website, is important. If your program has completed the NASPAA Annual Program Survey, an interim step to articulating conformance is to provide a link on the program's website to the NASPAA Data website, which would include your program's student achievement data.

Site Visitors

- **Who determines the detailed schedule of the onsite visit?**
  - The on-the-ground site visit schedule is determined by the program and the site visit chair. Typically, the site visit chair provides the program with a list of meetings and expectations, which the program proposes as a working schedule. The site visit chair has final approval of the schedule. The schedule is intended to (at least) reflect the priorities of COPRA, per the interim report. A sample site visit schedule is available in the Site Visit Manual.
- **How are site visitors matched with programs?**
  - Trained site visitors are matched with programs based on several factors, including professional background and experience, geography, and knowledge directly relatable to the program or COPRA's concerns with the program. Efforts are made to ensure no conflicts of interest exist between the team and the program.
- **Does NASPAA reimburse alcohol?**
  - Minimally. You may submit for reimbursement for one glass of table wine or its equivalent with dinner.
- **Where do I submit my expense report to?**
  - Please scan and send your voucher *electronically* within 60 days of your visit togregory@naspaa.org. Do **not** seek reimbursement directly from the program under review.
- **How long after the site visit do I have to send in my expenses?**
  - Site visitors should send in their expenses within one week of the end of the site visit to the NASPAA office. NASPAA will accept expense reports up to 60 days after the visit. After 60 days NASPAA will not honor the reimbursement request.

- **Do I need to provide any verification for mileage on my personal automobile for the visit?**
  - Site Visitors seeking reimbursement for mileage on their personal vehicle should include a Google Map, MapQuest, or other such print out verifying the mileage. NASPAA reimburses at the IRS mileage rate for that year. For those driving to the site visit, the request for mileage should not exceed the comparable rate of common carrier.
- **If my Site Visit coincides with additional travel I am doing how will NASPAA reimburse me?**
  - If a site visitor is traveling to/from another destination in conjunction with their visit, NASPAA will only reimburse for the portion of the expense that pertains to the visit. For example, if a site visitor purchases airline tickets to a visit in DC and is traveling to New York for a conference then flying from New York back to their home, NASPAA is happy to reimburse the portion of the trip that pertains directly to the visit.
- **Are there any restrictions on what is an allowable expense?**
  - Site Visitors will not be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages other than table wine or its equivalent. NASPAA will also not reimburse for expenses such as childcare or pet-boarding while you participate in the visit.
- **How do I become a site visitor?**
  - Come to a training! COPRA hosts in-person and online trainings throughout the year. If you're interested, email gregory@naspaa.org.
- **Do site visitors receive an honorarium?**
  - No, the peer review is completely volunteer-based. NASPAA is lucky to have so many willing expert volunteers!
- **What does site visitor training entail?**
  - Every site visitor must go through the NASPAA site visitor training, either in-person or online. The training has several video prerequisites, and is followed by a training session led by an approved trainer. The training emphasizes the norms of being a NASPAA site visitor (logistics, role of the site visit, expectations), as well as education on the NASPAA Accreditation Standards. Site Visitor Training takes place throughout the year at several conferences.
- **How are site visitors matched with programs?**
  - Site visitors are matched with programs based on several factors, including professional background and experience, geography, and knowledge directly relatable to the program or COPRA's concerns with the program. Efforts are taken to ensure no conflicts of interest between the site visit team and program.
- **Who is eligible to be a site visitor?**
  - Each team consists of three: a chair, an academic, and a practitioner. Academic site visitors are expected to be at least associate-level professors, and practitioners are expected to hold graduate degrees as well as have 7+ years of public service work experience (typically explicitly hiring our graduates).
- **When will my site visit take place?**

- Site visits occur between late January and late March of each year. If COPRA recommends your program proceed to a site visit, it will take place in the Spring of your cohort year. After NASPAA has matched a team, you will coordinate directly with the team to identify dates and the on-the-ground schedule.

- **How long is a site visit?**
  - The typical site visit lasts 2.5 days. If the institution is hosting a site visit for multiple programs or satellite campuses, the visit may be extended. Further, if the program is hosting a follow-up visit, after a one-year reaccreditation, the visit is typically only one day.
- **What is the site visit report?**
  - Upon completing the site visit, the site visit team has 30 days to draft a report addressing the concerns of COPRA as well as providing evidence from the visit. Programs then have the opportunity to review the draft for errors of fact, before it is locked by the team for COPRA review.
- **How do I complete the site visit report?**
  - The site visit report is completed in the NASPAA Data Center. Instructions can be found here.
- **How are expenses handled?**
  - Site Visitors are responsible for arranging the logistics of the visit with the program. After the visit, site visitors should send all receipts and the expense voucher directly to NASPAA. NASPAA then invoices the program in the aggregate. At no time should money exchange hands between the program and the team. Site visitors should be reasonably sensitive to costs.

Hosting Site Visits: For Programs

- **Who determines the detailed schedule of the onsite visit?**
  - The on-the-ground site visit schedule is determined by the program and the site visit chair. Typically, the site visit chair provides the program with a list of meetings and expectations, which the program proposes as a working schedule. The site visit chair has final approval of the schedule. The schedule is intended to (at least) reflect the priorities of COPRA, per the interim report. A sample site visit schedule is available in the Site Visit Manual.
- **Why does the team want to meet with my university provost?**
  - Site Visit Teams want to meet with everyone that has a stake in the program: faculty, students, alumni, and even university administration. The provost, in particular, can provide the site visit team with a window into the institutional context the program operates within. The team can also offer insight to the provost on the strengths of the program.
- **How do I prepare for a site visit? What documents should be made available?**
  - The best way to prepare for your site visit is to consult with your site visit chair. The chair is responsible for helping translate the interim report and COPRA's

questions into a workable schedule. The chair has final approval of the schedule. Your chair should be able to help you grasp who the team will want to meet with, as well as what it will want to review (this is also available in the Site Visit Manual). In general, the team will want to meet with faculty, students, alumni, related student support staff, and university administration. The team will also want to review all documentation related to your program evaluation and student assessment processes, often including faculty meeting minutes, sample capstones/portfolios/assignments, admissions files, etc. Your COPRA liaison is also a good resource, helping to articulate the evidence COPRA wants the site visit team to document.

- **How much does a typical site visit cost?**
  - While this can vary based on your location and travel costs particular to your region, a typical site visit hosted in the United States costs between $2000 and $3000. Programs are encouraged to minimize costs by securing hotel rooms at university-based hotels. Please contact NASPAA staff for information about hosting a site visit outside of the United States.
- **How are site visitors matched with programs?**
  - Site visitors are matched with programs based on several factors, including professional background and experience, geography, and knowledge directly relatable to the program or COPRA's concerns with the program. Efforts are taken to ensure no conflicts of interest exist between the team and program.
- **When will my site visit take place?**
  - Site visits occur between late January and late March of each year. If COPRA recommends your program proceed to a site visit, it will take place in the Spring of your cohort year. After NASPAA has matched a team, you will coordinate directly with the team to identify dates.
- **How long is a site visit?**
  - The typical site visit lasts 2.5 days. If your institution is hosting a site visit for multiple programs or satellite campuses, the visit may be extended. Further, if you are a one-year reaccredited program hosting a follow-up visit, the visit is typically only one day.
- **Who visits my program?**
  - Each team consists of two academics, including the chair. The third team member is a practitioner. Academics are expected to be at least associate-level professors, and practitioners are expected to hold graduate degrees as well as have 7+ years of public service work experience (typically explicitly hiring our graduates).
- **What if I have concerns about the composition of the proposed site visit team?**
  - NASPAA staff work to avoid any conflicts of interest and match your program with a team appropriate to your context. There is a limited pool of volunteers, but COPRA and NASPAA staff coordinate with the programs to ensure a productive site visit. Ultimately, the site visit helps COPRA clarify and confirm

evidence presented in the Self-Study Report, and COPRA has final approval on site visit teams.

- **If I have two or more programs being (re)accredited – can they share a site visit?**
  - Yes! COPRA is interested in making the process as effective and efficient as possible. If you have multiple programs in the same accreditation cohort, typically within the same governance unit, a site visit team will be matched to review all programs in one visit. Depending on the scale, your team and visit length may be adjusted to ensure a thorough review.
- **What is the site visit report?**
  - The site visit report is the team's communication with COPRA. Upon completing the site visit, the site visit team has 30 days to draft a report addressing the concerns of COPRA, as well as providing evidence from the visit. Programs then have the opportunity to review the draft for errors of fact, before it is locked by the team for COPRA review.
- **What are my response opportunities?**
  - A program's initial response opportunity is to address the points in the interim report, prior to the site visit. Upon completing the site visit, the site visit team has 30 days to draft a report addressing the concerns of COPRA, as well as providing evidence from the visit. Programs then have the opportunity to review the draft for errors of fact, before it is locked by the team for COPRA review. The program then has the opportunity to respond directly to COPRA, ahead of its summer decision meeting, using the final response to respond to items in the site visit report, elaborate on changes the program has made or plans to make, or provide final supplementary information requested by the Commission.
- **How are expenses handled?**
  - Site Visitors are responsible for arranging the logistics of the visit with the program. After the visit, site visitors send all receipts and the expense voucher directly to NASPAA. NASPAA then invoices the program in the aggregate. At no time should money exchange hands between the program and the team. Site visitors should be reasonably sensitive to costs.
- **Can my program pay for anything on the visit?**
  - Yes! We encourage programs to arrange the hotel for the teams, and when they are able, programs can directly pay for lodging costs. Further, the program will likely pay directly for meals any on-campus meals during the visit (site visit teams often have at least one "working lunch"). Some programs have university requirements for travel arrangements, and are able to book flights through a travel agent. At no time should money exchange hands between the program and the team. If you have questions about specific expenses, please emailgregory@naspaa.org.
- **Does NASPAA reimburse alcohol?**
  - Minimally. Site Visitors may submit for reimbursement for one glass of table wine or its equivalent with dinner.
- **Are there any restrictions on what is an allowable expense?**

- Site Visitors will not be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages other than table wine or its equivalent. NASPAA will also not reimburse for expenses such as childcare or pet-boarding while you participate in the visit.
- **Do site visitors receive an honorarium?**
  - No, site visitors are completely volunteer-based. NASPAA is lucky to have so many willing, expert volunteers!

Students

- **Why Should I Choose a NASPAA Accredited Program?**
  - NASPAA Accreditation indicates that the program has undergone a rigorous peer review process and has been judged to be a quality program by its peers. Programs seeking accreditation must be in substantial compliance with the Standards of education for the field. The accreditation process is designed to foster continuous assessment and improvement even after accreditation has been achieved.
  - The benefits of graduating from an accredited program when seeking employment are that your prospective employer is assured that your degree has come from a program that is recognized as meeting a standard of quality and that you have been adequately prepared for the profession. This is particularly useful if the prospective employer is not familiar with the institution from which you receive your degree. Additionally, in some cases the employer may require that your degree come from an accredited program to be eligible for tuition reimbursements.
- **What Does it Mean if a Program is Not Accredited?**
  - Unaccredited programs are not necessarily poor quality programs. There are a number of reasons why a program may choose to not seek NASPAA accreditation. If you are considering a program that is not accredited you should find out as much information about the program as possible before enrolling. Questions to consider: is the institution itself accredited by a regional or national accreditor, where are the graduates of the program finding jobs, what do the alumni of the program think of its rigor and quality?
  - One type of unaccredited program to be explicitly aware of is a “diploma mill” or “degree mill”. These types of programs detract from educational quality by allowing students to purchase or obtain a degree with little to no work. More information about how to avoid a degree mill can be found here.
- **What is the difference between having NASPAA membership and being accredited by NASPAA?**
  - NASPAA is a membership organization that programs in the field of public administration, public policy, and public affairs may apply to join. NASPAA members have all agreed to a code of good practice. However, not all NASPAA members are accredited by NASPAA. In order for a program to be accredited, it

must submit to a peer review process and be judged to be in compliance with NASPAA Standards. All NASPAA accredited programs are NASPAA Members, but not all NASPAA members are accredited programs. When using the NASPAA School search, select “accredited” to only view only accredited programs.

- **What is the difference between institutional accreditation and NASPAA accreditation?**
    - NASPAA Accreditation focuses solely on Master’s Degree programs in the fields of public administration, public policy, and public affairs. Its purpose is to ensure that these programs are in compliance with the Standards set by the field. Institutional accreditation granted by regional and national accreditors focuses on the Institution as a whole and ensures that the University is meeting a level of quality set forth by their accreditor.
    - Whether an institution is accredited by a regional or national accreditor is particularly important in the United States due to the fact that students are only able to obtain federal financial assistance if the institution they are attending has achieved accreditation from an accreditation organization recognized by the US Department of Education. NASPAA Accreditation requires that the institution be accredited by a regional or national accreditor, or the appropriate recognition body for programs based outside of the United States.
    - As with degree mills, it is also important to be alert to programs holding accreditation from “accreditation mills”. These accreditors operate similarly to diploma mills by allowing universities and programs to purchase or easily obtain accreditation without rigor and transparency. More information about how to ensure the program you are interested is legitimately accredited can be found here.
- **If I attended a program that was recently awarded accreditation can I say I attended an accredited program?**
    - NASPAA Accreditation is effective September 1 of the year accreditation is awarded. If you graduate from the program after September 1 of that year you are considered to have graduated from an accredited program. Accreditation is not retroactive.
- **If I am attending a program that has recently lost its accreditation, what does this mean for me?**
    - If a program has been denied reaccreditation it will be removed from the Accreditation Roster effective September 1 of that year. If you graduate before September 1 you are considered to have graduated from an accredited program, if you do not graduate by that date you are not considered to have graduated from an accredited program.
- **What Process Does a Program go Through to be Accredited?**
    - Programs that seek NASPAA accreditation go through a rigorous peer review process. Programs begin by conducting a year-long Self Study Report with regards to NASPAA Standards. They submit their report at the conclusion of the Self Study year to the Commission on Peer Review Accreditation (COPRA). COPRA is made up of 13 of their peers and a practitioner public member. The Commission reviews the program’s Self Study Report and provides initial

feedback asking for clarification on issues of concern. The program then hosts a three member Site Visit Team of trained volunteers that consists of two academic members and a practitioner. The team reviews the program's Self Study Report as well as the initial feedback from COPRA. They act as the Commissions "eyes and ears", meeting with program faculty, students and alumni, as well as key administrators at the institution over a three day period. The Site Visit team then writes a report to COPRA. Throughout the process the program has an opportunity to respond to concerns and provide additional information. The Commission reviews all of the information they have on the program and makes a decision regarding accreditation. Programs can be accredited for a maximum of seven years at the end of which they may apply for reaccreditation.

- **If a program's accreditation expires soon, what does that mean for the program I want to apply to?**
    - The academic year listed with each program on the accredited roster indicates not only the expiration date, but also the program's expected reaccreditation cohort. If a program's accreditation expires on August 31, 2018, then the program will most likely enter the reaccreditation cycle in August of 2017, to ensure continuity in its accreditation (the roster would read 2017-2018). Because NASPAA Accreditation is voluntary, a program may choose to not seek reaccreditation, at which point its accreditation status would lapse.
- **What do I do if I have a complaint against an accredited program?**
    - If you have a complaint against an accredited program please contact NASPAA staff at copra@naspaa.org. The complaint must relate to the NASPAA Standards; COPRA is an accrediting body, not a regulator or an appellate tribunal for student or faculty grievances. For more information on complaints please see our Policies and Procedures.

NASPAA ACCREDITED
The Commission on Peer Review & Accreditation

NASPAA 2018 ACCREDITATION INSTITUTE

SESSION	TITLE	FACILITATOR
1:30pm-2:15pm	5A: Starting the Accreditation Process	Charles E. Menifield, PhD

SESSION DESCRIPTION: In this session, we discuss the accreditation process for programs that are considering accreditation. During this session we will discuss each phase of the pre- and post- accreditation process. Each of the phases in the accreditation process are graphically shown below. When the workshop concludes, participants should be able to realistically look at their program and plot a course moving forward.

Prerequisite Phase:

- Become a NASPAA Member
- Attend the Accreditation Institute
- Examine the self-study report and each of the data points and assessment processes needed to complete the self-study
- Establish a clear connection between the accreditation process your program's strategic initiatives
- Determine if you have four or more years of student data and one year of faculty data (self-study year)
- Ensure that you have examined your school's processes and data before starting the process
- Notify NASPAA that you intend to pursue accreditation and request any information that you may need

Eligibility Phase:

- Complete an Eligibility Application and submit by April 15 or August 15
- COPRA will review the application against the NASPAA Preconditions for Accreditation Review and recommend whether or not the program is prepared to move forward to self-study.
- Programs will provide:
  - Basic program information (Name and Contact Information)
  - Institutional Accreditation Information
  - Program's Mission Statement
  - Program Values as related to the Mission Statement
  - Description of faculty and student diversity
  - Summary of program focus in preparing students for employment

- Program Characteristics (data on full- and part-time students, population served (Pre-service vs In-Career), credit hours, etc.)
- Capacity to Evaluate (history of program, number of full time faculty, current program evaluation, and resources available to sustain the program)

Self-Study Phase:

- Programs have up to 3 years to submit a self-study after the eligibility application has been reviewed
- Programs can request an eligibility counselor to provide support early on
- The self-study requires the completion of 7 Standards that address various components of the program
  - **Standard 1: Managing the Program Strategically** addresses the mission of the program, performance expectations, and program evaluation.
  - **Standard 2: Matching Governance with the Mission** examines administrative capacity and faculty governance.
  - **Standard 3: Matching Operations with the Mission: Faculty Performance** examines faculty qualifications, faculty diversity and faculty research productivity & service.
  - **Standard 4: Matching Operations with the Mission: Serving Students** examines student recruitment, student admissions, support for the students, student completion and employment, and student diversity.
  - **Standard 5: Matching Operations with the Mission: Student Learning** examines universal, mission specific required, mission specific elective and professional competencies.
  - **Standard 6: Matching Resources with the Mission** examines the adequacy of program resources.
  - **Standard 7: Matching Communications with the Mission** examines appropriate and current information about the program mission, policies, practices, and accomplishments.

Accreditation Cohort Year 3:

- Receive and Respond to Interim Report (Fall, Winter)
- Work with COPRA liaison, Site Visit Chair
- Host Site Visit (Spring)
- Respond to Site Visit Report (May)
- Accreditation Decision (July)

RELEVANT RESOURCES

- *Eligibility Application.* https://www.naspaa.org/sites/default/files/docs/2019-01/eligibility-instructions-12-20-2011.pdf
- *Considering Accreditation:* https://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/why-seek-accreditation
- *Self-Study Instruction: NASPAA Standards. 2017.* https://www.naspaa.org/sites/default/files/docs/2019-01/SSI%20Instructions%202017%20FINAL.pdf
- *NASPAA Official Standards & Policies.* https://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/standards-and-guidance/official-standards-policy

Fundamentals of the Self-Study Report (SSR) and the Site Visit

Preparing for the Self-Study Year (SSY): Are you ready?

- SSY Leadership. Things to consider include: Who will take the lead? Use of consultants? Faculty/staff/student/other stakeholder buy-in ____ Rating
- Mission; Public Service Values; Programmatic goals: SSY is generally a time to review and revise as needed involving widespread inclusion of stakeholders. Generally it is not a time to create these for the first time. ____ Rating
- Do you have strategic processes in place? Examples: Advisory Board, strategic planning process, Alumni Board, regular meetings involving stakeholders as appropriate where planning is done and program performance is reviewed? ____ Rating
- Do you have the data/information you need?
  - Evidence of ongoing program assessment:
    - Student application/acceptance/enrollment/internship data; completion/placement data; ____ Rating
    - Faculty/adjunct class coverage; AQ/PQ ____ Rating
    - Indirect assessment (examples: exit surveys, alumni surveys, employer surveys, internship supervisor surveys) ____ Rating
    - Direct assessment of student learning tied to the required universal competencies (you don't want to wait until your SSY to begin student learning assessment) ____ Rating
    - Diversity: faculty and student demographic data, strategies for creating a climate of inclusiveness ____ Rating
    - Faculty contributions (tied to mission) in research, teaching, service ____ Rating

Not everything listed above needs to be ready before your SSY. However, you need to know you can access or compile or develop it.

Take 3 minutes and work down this list. Rate where you believe your program is on each bullet item.

Scale	Metric Definition
4	**I know we have already done/developed/addressed this item.**
3	**We haven't already done this but we know it is coming and we know how we're going to do/develop/address this item.**
2	**We haven't done this and we don't yet know how we're going to address this item.**
1	**I have no idea if we have addressed this or not.**
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27 – 36 = You're off to a good start | 18 – 26 = You have some catching up to do | <18 = You may not be ready

Fundamentals of the Self-Study Report (SSR) and the Site Visit

Mechanics of the accreditation process

At a minimum, COPRA expects the following documents in addition to the SSR:

- A Diversity Plan
- An Assessment Plan
- A Logic Model

Other documents that programs have found very useful:

- Strategic Plan
- Program Evaluation Plan showing how the program engages in ongoing assessment of standards 2 through 7
- Curriculum map

Accreditation Process Timeline:

- August 15 – programs must lock and submit their Self-Study Reports in the NASPAA Data Center. Along with the SSR, programs should remit review fees and submit the application cover page.

- October – COPRA meets to review/discuss SSRs for all programs in the accreditation cohort.

- October – November – Programs receive an Interim Report from COPRA, along with notification of the program's COPRA liaison. The Interim Report provides the program with COPRA's concerns, questions, and requests for clarifications. COPRA's comments are organized by NASPAA Standard.
    - Possible recommendations from COPRA: proceed to site visit; or COPRA has serious reservations about conformity with NASPAA standards which appear to be of such a magnitude as to raise doubts about the wisdom of proceeding to a site visit.
        - In some cases, programs may proceed to site visit even if COPRA recommends that they shouldn't. This is a strategic decision.
    - COPRA gives you a liaison. You should take advantage of this.

- Early December – programs must notify COPRA of their intent to proceed to a site visit.

- January - Shortly after receiving the Interim Report and notifying COPRA of intention to proceed – programs may prepare a response to Interim Report. Programs should use this response to clarify, to update, and to signal actions that will be taken in response to issues raised in Interim Report.

- November – January – After conflict of interest checks, the site visit team (SVT) is agreed upon. It consists of a chair (senior academic with experience in the accreditation process and performing site visits); a second academic; and a practitioner. COPRA staff work hard to align site visitors with characteristics of the program and COPRA's needs from the site visit. Programs can voice concerns about specific members if that is appropriate.

- December – January – The SVT and program director agree on site visit dates. Site visits are generally conducted late January through the end of March and are usually two and one-half days in length, although if programs have multiple sites or multiple modalities or other extenuating circumstances the visit can take a bit longer. The program director will want to be sure that appropriate stakeholders will be available before agreeing to the dates. Typical meetings scheduled during the SV include individuals such as Provosts, Deans, nucleus faculty, various support staff (career centers, advising, internship advisors), advisory board members, alumni, and current students.

- Several weeks prior to the Site Visit – the program director (in consultation with the SVT Chair) drafts an itinerary.

- January – March – Site Visit occurs; team begins drafting site visit report (SVR)

- 30 days post visit - The SVT has a draft of the SVR – the SVT chair shares the draft with the program director, who is asked to review it for accuracy (i.e. only factual errors will be addressed) within.

- Up to 8 weeks after the SV – the SVT uploads the final SVR in the NASPAA Data Center.
    - For each Standard (regardless of whether COPRA has cited the standard or not) the SVT will indicate whether it has concerns and if so, what the concerns are.

- End of May – the program may provide a response to the SVR. Similar to its response to the Interim Report, the program may clarify items in the report, update evidence of conformance, and/or signal actions that will be taken in response to the SVR.

- June – COPRA meets to review/discuss the program's accreditation. The COPRA liaison "presents" the program after consultation with two-three other Commissioners who form a "Group of 3". The liaison makes a recommendation based on his or her review of the SSR, Interim Report, Response to Interim Report, SVR, and Response to SVR. The entire Commission reviews and discusses the evidence, and votes on a final action. Possible actions detailed in July decision letters are:

    - For programs that are already accredited:
        - Accredited for 7 years with no monitoring. Note, that if a program has either voluntarily sought, or been recommended by COPRA, a delay, it will be accredited for 6 years. While rare, there have been occasions when a program has delayed for up to 2 years, in which case it would be accredited for 5 years.
        - Accredited for 7 years with monitoring on specific standards.
        - One-year accreditation with specific information on conformance issues the program must address. This involves a response to the decision letter and a potential second site visit. The site visit is often abbreviated and there have been occasions when a second site visit was not required.
        - Denial of accreditation.

    - For programs seeking accreditation for the first time:
        - Accredited for 7 years with no monitoring.
        - Accredited for 7 years with monitoring.
        - A one or two year deferral with specific information on conformance issues the program must address. This involves a second SSR and a second site visit.
        - Denial of accreditation.

NASPAA ACCREDITED
The Commission on Peer Review & Accreditation

NASPAA 2018 ACCREDITATION INSTITUTE

SESSION	TITLE	FACILITATOR
1:30 PM – 2:15PM	5A: The Accreditation Review	Jade Berry James, PhD

SESSION DESCRIPTION: This session is for programs who are ready to begin their self-study report and review. We discuss assessment readiness, the mechanics of the assessment process and the review process for programs seeking accreditation. In addition, we discuss strategies to assist the site visit team.

In accreditation review, programs conduct a self-evaluation for their mission-based success. It is the perfect time for programs to ask the following questions: What are your goals? What are your strengths? Your opportunities? Your successes? In the accreditation review, programs revisit their mission and goals, engage with stakeholders, gather data, and assess student learning to evaluate the program. After submitting the self-study report, programs work with their COPRA liaison to respond to the Interim Report, and with the Site Visit Chair to plan and host a site visit. Following the on-campus site visit, programs may respond to the site visit report and/or provide final pieces of evidence ahead of COPRA's final decision.

Planning the program's continuous improvement process
Programs should review COPRA Policy Statements, the site visit manual and other online resources developed to assist you in the self-study process.

RELEVANT RESOURCES

NASPAA Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation Policy and Procedures, https://www.naspaa.org/sites/default/files/docs/2019-07/COPRA%20Policies%20and%20Procedures%202019%20FINAL_0.pdf

NASPAA Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation Policy Statements, https://naspaaaccreditation.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/copra-policy-statement-10-201621.pdf

NASPAA Accreditation Cycle, https://accreditation.naspaa.org/reaccreditation/accreditation-cycle/

NASPAA Official Standards & Policies. https://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/standards-and-guidance/official-standards-policy

NASPAA Standards and Guidance, https://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/standards-and-guidance

NASPAA Standards by Standard Guidance, https://www.naspaa.org/standard-standard-guidance

NASPAA Thinking Strategically about Diversity and Inclusion, https://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/standards-and-guidance/thinking-strategically-about-diversity-and-inclusion

Fundamentals of the Self-Study Report (SSR) and the Site Visit

PREPARING FOR THE SELF STUDY YEAR (SSY):

Are you ready for your Self Study Year? Do you have a people in place, a clear plan or the information that you will need? Not everything listed below needs to be ready before your Self Study Year. However, you need to know you can access or compile or develop it. *Take 5 minutes and work down this list. Rate where you believe your program is on each item.*

READY ITEMS	RATING
SSY Leadership. Things to consider include: Who will take the lead? Use of consultants? Faculty/staff/student/other stakeholder buy-in	
Mission; Public Service Values; Programmatic goals: SSY is generally a time to review and revise as needed involving widespread inclusion of stakeholders. Generally it is not a time to create these for the first time.	
Do you have strategic processes in place? Examples: Advisory Board, strategic planning process, Alumni Board, regular meetings involving stakeholders as appropriate where planning is done and program performance is reviewed	
Evidence of ongoing program assessment:	
Student application/acceptance/enrollment/internship data; completion/placement data	
Faculty/adjunct class coverage	
AQ/PQ	
Indirect assessment (examples: exit surveys, alumni surveys, employer surveys, internship supervisor surveys)	
Direct assessment of student learning tied to the required universal competencies (you don't want to wait until your SSY to begin student learning assessment)	
Diversity: faculty and student demographic data, strategies for creating a climate of inclusiveness	
Faculty contributions (tied to mission) in research, teaching, service	
TOTAL	

Scale	Metric Definition
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Fundamentals of the Self-Study Report (SSR) and the Site Visit

Mechanics of the accreditation process

At a minimum, COPRA expects the following documents in addition to the SSR (see COPRA policy statements and Self-Study Instructions):

- A Diversity Plan
- An Assessment Plan
- A Logic Model

Other documents that programs have found very useful:

- Strategic Plan
- Program Evaluation Plan showing how the program engages in ongoing assessment of Standards 2 through 7
- Curriculum map

Accreditation Process Timeline:

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    - Denial of accreditation.

NASPAA Site Visitor Training Workbook

NASPAA Accreditation Institute
October 16, 2019

Facilitators:
Jade Berry James, North Carolina State University
Charles Menifield, Rutgers University - Newark

SERVING AS A SITE VISITOR

- **Pre Visit Preparation** (http://accreditation.naspaa.org/resources/official-standards-policies/)
  - Review NASPAA Standards and corresponding videos: http://accreditation.naspaa.org/for-site-visitors/site-visitor-training/
  - Review Self-Study Instructions
  - Review Site Visit Manual
  - Review current COPRA Policies (Policy Statements)
  - Perform conflict of interest check when matched to program

- **Pre Visit Preparation, Program-specific in NASPAA Data Center** (naspaa.civicore.com)
  - Review Self-Study Report and appendices
  - Review Interim Report and program response
  - Connect with Chair on Responsibilities
    - Draft Preparatory Questions
    - Consider needed meetings, documents to review
  - Coordinate travel with team (and program)
    - Chair tasked with setting on-the-ground schedule

- **The Site Visit** (2.5 days on-the-ground)
  - Connect with team re: strategy, conduct
  - Faciliatate formative and collegial discussions with all stakeholders
  - Confirm and clarify, inquire; Do not judge or evaluate
  - Review evidence (source documents) related to program evaluatation, student learning assessment, mission, etc.: confirm processes, progress
  - Focus on public service values
  - Draft report findings
    - Document evidence and conversations related to Interim Report concerns

- **Site Visit Report**
  - Coordinate Report through the Site Visit Chair
  - Indicate concerns/no concerns, as supported by evidence
    - Make no final judgments
  - Respnd to COPRA concerns
    - Focus on evidence, what was reviewed, discussed, observed, not pre-judgment
  - Review (all) accreditation standards
  - Report through NASPAA Data Center

- **Chair Responsibilities**
  - Contact COPRA Liaison
    - Understand goals of visit
  - Work with Program Representative to arrange schedule and secure stakeholder meetings and documents
    - Communicate goals and role of visit
  - Assign the workload for the visit appropriately with the team
  - Direct the onsite meetings, including the exit interview, making sure attention is given to COPRA priorities
    - Introduce team and purpose for the visit and each meeting
  - Coordinate site visit report
    - Notify program of draft and finalize report post-program review

CASE QUESTIONS

Using the Example Interim Report below, review the Program's Mission Statement and Items 1, 2, and 3. After you have reviewed each item, **divide the items at the table** and consider the following questions. Once you have completed, discuss the items as a group and share your responses.

1. What are the strengths of the mission statement provided in relation to the Standards? What are the weaknesses?

2. Why did COPRA raise these issues?

3. During the Site Visit, who would you want to meet with to address COPRA's Interim Report concerns? What questions might you ask them?

4. What supporting documentation might you need to see to explore the issues raised in the interim report and provide evidence back to COPRA?

EXAMPLE INTERIM REPORT

Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation
Interim Report to the

Master of Public Administration Program
NASPAA University

November 23, 2018

The Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation has reviewed the Self Study Report (SSR) for the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program at NASPAA University. The Commission commends the program for strengths evident in the Self-Study Report and requests further information on the following point for its review. If the program proceeds to a site visit, particular attention should be paid to the items listed below. Please relate any responses to the program's specific mission and goals.

Program Mission Statement (as reported in the SSR):

The MPA Program seeks to develop diverse, ethical, and objective leaders for the public and nonprofit sectors. Our program seeks to advance innovation, accountability, transparency, and equity by graduating competent managers and analysts to lead across Virginia, fostering a commitment to public service, and supporting collaboration and best practice across public service organizations.

Item 1: Standard 1.1 – Mission Statement
Standard 1.1 states, "The program will have a statement of mission that guides performance expectations and their evaluation, including:

- its purpose and public service values, given the program's particular emphasis on public affairs, administration, and policy
- the population of students, employers, and professionals the program intends to serve, and
- the contributions it intends to produce to advance the knowledge, research, and practice of public affairs, administration, and policy."

The Self Study Report indicates that the Alumni, Advisory Board, Employers, and Faculty are involved in the development of the mission statement. However, it is not clear how these stakeholders are involved (or will continue to be involved in its review):

> "In preparation for the self-study report, a committee of the faculty reviewed the current mission statement and suggested adjustments to better reflect the program into which we have grown. Our advisory board, which includes former students, and the entire faculty reviewed the proposed new mission statement. The mission statement was ratified by the faculty in March 2016."

The Commission expects accredited programs to define a mission that benefits, responds to, and impacts its community. Based on the narrative, it appears the program relied heavily on only one aspect of its community – faculty – to review the mission statement. The Commission requests additional information regarding the process that was used in the development, as well as expectations for the continued evaluation of the mission statement. The Commission requests that the Site Visit Team explore this issue with the program during the site visit, paying particular attention to ways in which the development and continued evaluation of the mission statement reflect the program's community of internal and external stakeholders.

Item 2: Standard 1.3 – Program Evaluation

Standard 1.3 states, "The program will collect, apply, and report information about its performance and its operations to guide the evolution of the program's mission and the program's design and continuous improvement with respect to standards two through seven."

Section 1.3.2 of the Self-Study Report states,

> "…a significant percentage of our graduates (primarily pre-service students) do not find a job in either the public or non-profit sector immediately (about twenty to twenty-five percent in recent years). On the face of things, this is a troubling result vis-à-vis the intent of the program to train leaders in the public and non-profit sectors. However, this is mostly a geographical issue related to the lack of professionalization in our region and the unwillingness of many of our students (who are by and large first generation college students) to leave the immediate area to find a job...Many wind up in private sector management careers, especially in the area of healthcare. Our as-of-yet untested hypothesis is that, as our graduates slowly occupy ever more and ever more powerful roles in local and regional agencies, professionally trained managers will become the norm rather than the exception, thus transforming local governance and service provision."

The Commission seeks evidence that accredited programs continuously improve, directing resources toward programmatic outcomes that align with their mission and public service values. Programs should define a mission and strategies for pursuing said mission, including processes for collecting and assessing information to evaluate progress toward its objectives. Based on the narrative shared above, it is unclear the extent to which the program is making evidence-based decisions in pursuit of its mission. The program has acknowledged student employment outcomes do not align with its mission, but it seems has yet to explore the issue and its impact deeper.

The Commission requests the program elaborate on the issues discussed above. How does the fact that a quarter of students ultimately find employment in the private, healthcare management impact the program's mission? How has the program's system of evaluation analyzed these circumstances? What opportunities exist to address the apparent mismatch? The Commission requests the Site Visit Team examine this nuance in the program's employment data, specifically discussing with the program how it can evaluate this issue as well as how the program can facilitate its "untested hypothesis" and support professionalizing regional agencies.

Item 3: Standard 4.3 – Support for Students

Standard 4.3 states, "The program will ensure the availability of support services, such as curriculum advising, internship placement and supervision, career counseling, and job placement assistance to enable students to progress in careers in public affairs, administration, and policy."

In Section 4.3.4 the Self-Study Report states, "All students without professional work experience (pre-service) are required to complete at least one internship during their course of study…in Spring 2015, 69% of graduating students had participated in an internship."

The Commission seeks evidence that all students will have at least one experiential learning exercise and/or interaction with practitioners to ensure that students learn to apply their education. Internship participation should align with the program's mission.

The Commission requests a fuller description of how the program defines professional work experience and clarification of the exemptions granted to the 31% of students who did not complete an internship. Elsewhere in the self-study report the program (in the self-study year) enrolled significantly more preservice students than in-service. Does the program typically waive internships for some students classified as preservice? Were these students required to have work experience specific to the field of public policy or would any post-baccalaureate work would suffice?

Further, related to the discussion in Item 2, the Commission requests the Site Visit Team explore with the program how the its internship participation and opportunities align with its mission to develop public and nonprofit leaders.

Item 4: Standard 5.1 – Universal Required Competencies

Standard 5.1 states, "As the basis for its curriculum, the program will adopt a set of required competencies related to its mission and to public service values. The required competencies will include five domains: the ability

- to lead and manage in public governance;
- to participate in and contribute to the public policy process
- to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions;
- to articulate and apply a public service perspective;
- to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry."

The program in its SSR has chosen to elaborate on its assessment of the universal competency "to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry."

The program operationally defined the competency as the ability to:

- organize, develop, and communicate complex ideas in a clear and logical manner, both orally and written
- listen effectively to diverse viewpoints
- understand the impact of diversity on successful communication
- adapt to cultural interactions and dynamics
- recognize the importance of cultural aptitude in the delivery of public services
- develop service delivery which reflects cultural sensitivity

The Self-Study Report states that

> The program has referred to the Martin and Vaughn (2007) definition of cultural competency in defining learning outcomes: 'Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures, particularly in the context of human resources, non-profit organizations, and government agencies whose employees work with persons from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds. Cultural competence comprises four components: (a) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview, (b) Attitude towards cultural differences, (c) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.'"

The program further states that it uses the Capstone courses and papers and a student exit survey as its artifacts for measuring student learning outcomes. However, the program does not elaborate on why these measures were chosen and how they specifically relate to the student learning outcomes expected of the students. Further, the program is unclear regarding its full approach to assessment, including how these measures were analyzed and what the causes were for determining that "during the Self-Study year the Assessment Committee determined that cultural competency is not adequately addressed in the current curriculum."

The Commission seeks evidence of systematic assessment of student learning to demonstrate the program is taking action to ensure the attainment of, and improve performance with respect to, student competency across the entire curriculum.

The Commission requests the program provide further information on: why the Capstone projects and exit survey were chosen as measures; how they specifically relate to the student learning outcomes defined by the program for the chosen cultural universal competency; and the systematic process by which the faculty analyzed these measures to determine areas for programmatic improvement. Specifically, how did the program determine the inadequacy of the cultural competency learning outcomes and how does it plan to address this?

SCENARIOS

On-the-Ground Conduct

1. The Site Visit Team requested to meet with students in the program. The Program Administrator recruited students to meet with the site visit team. the student comments are uniformly positive praising the program for its strengths.
2. **The Interim Report indicates the Program submitted no diversity plan. The Program has a diverse student body.**
3. **Key members of the nucleus faculty are not available during the site visit.**
4. At a meeting with students, another member of the Site Visit Team begins to lecture about public service values.
5. At a meeting with the program chair, a member of the Site Visit Team begins talking about the value of the Site Visit Team member's home program's approach to curriculum design. What do you do?
6. The program offers courses online, moving toward offering its entire degree online. How can the team review compliance?
7. Program faculty are resisting developing student learning assessment above and beyond grading students.
8. **The Program is notably lacking in obvious student and faculty diversity. How can the team approach discussing the same topic with different programmatic stakeholders? For instance, if the program is struggling to articulate its climate of inclusiveness, how do you facilitate a conversation with students? Faculty? The provost?**

Site Visit Report

1. **The Team has found evidence that the program has not met the expectations with regard to assessing the universal required competencies, as appropriate for its accreditation cohort. How does the Team communicate this in the Report? To the program in person?**
2. **The students indicate that they are dissatisfied with the level of internship and career support provided by the program. The alumni echo this concern.**
3. The Team believes the program is doing an excellent job with regard to student support. Likewise, the Team thinks there are large opportunities to improve faculty support. How does the Team communicate this in the Report? To the Program in person?
4. **As a Site Visitor, what if you have a concern with conformance to a standard not raised by COPRA? What do you do?**
5. As a Site Visitor, what if a concern from COPRA is not a concern for you? What do you do? How is it reported?

SITE VISIT REPORT

Draft Management

- Check the "Make Report Visible To School and COPRA (Draft Ready)" box when you are ready for the report to be viewed externally.
- Do not click the "Submit and Lock Site Visit Report" button until you are completely finished with the report, you will no longer be able to edit the report after this button is checked and the report is saved.

Make Report Visible To School and COPRA (Draft Ready) ☐ Yes or ☐ No

Submit and Lock Site Visit Report ☐ Yes or ☐ No

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

1. List Members of site visit team, with Title and University
2. Dates of the site visit
3. Upload the Site Visit Schedule

SECTION 2 BACKGROUND AND MISSION

State the program's Mission (as reported in the SSR):

The MPA Program seeks to develop diverse, ethical, and objective leaders for the public and nonprofit sectors. Our program seeks to advance innovation, accountability, transparency, and equity by graduating competent managers and analysts to lead across Virginia, fostering a commitment to public service, and supporting collaboration and best practice across public service organizations.

STANDARD 1. MANAGING THE PROGRAM STRATEGICALLY

Item 1: Standard 1.1 – Mission Statement

Standard 1.1 states, "The program will have a statement of mission that guides performance expectations and their evaluation, including:

- its purpose and public service values, given the program's particular emphasis on public affairs, administration, and policy
- the population of students, employers, and professionals the program intends to serve, and
- the contributions it intends to produce to advance the knowledge, research, and practice of public affairs, administration, and policy."

The Commission expects accredited programs to define a mission that benefits, responds to, and impacts its community. Based on the narrative, it appears the program relied heavily on only one aspect of its community – faculty – to review the mission statement. The Commission **requests** additional information regarding the process that was used in the development, as well as expectations for the continued evaluation of the mission statement. The Commission **requests** that the Site Visit Team explore this issue with the program during the site visit, paying particular attention to ways in which the development and continued evaluation of the mission statement reflect the program's community of internal and external stakeholders.

Standard 1.1 Status ☐ Cited by COPRA

Standard 1.1 Comments

The Interim Report cited this standard. The Site Visit Team …

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Status (Choose One): ☐ **"Have No Concerns"** **or** ☐ **"Have Concerns"**

Item 2: Standard 1.3 – Program Evaluation

Standard 1.3 states, "The program will collect, apply, and report information about its performance and its operations to guide the evolution of the program's mission and the program's design and continuous improvement with respect to standards two through seven."

The Commission **seeks evidence** that accredited programs continuously improve, directing resources toward programmatic outcomes that align with their mission and public service values. Programs should define a mission and strategies for pursuing said mission, including processes for collecting and assessing information to evaluate progress toward its objectives. Based on the narrative shared above, it is unclear the extent to which the program is making evidence-based decisions in pursuit of its mission. The program has acknowledged student employment outcomes do not align with its mission, but it seems has yet to explore the issue and its impact deeper.

The Commission **requests** the program elaborate on the issues discussed above. How does the fact that a quarter of students ultimately find employment in the private, healthcare management impact the program's mission? How has the program's system of evaluation analyzed these circumstances? What opportunities exist to address the apparent mismatch? The Commission **requests** the Site Visit Team examine this nuance in the program's employment data, specifically discussing with the program how it can evaluate this issue as well as how the program can facilitate its "untested hypothesis" and support professionalizing regional agencies.

Standard 1.3 Status ☐ Cited by COPRA

Standard 1.3 Comments

The Interim Report cited this standard. The Site Visit Team …

Status (Choose One): ☐ **"Have No Concerns"** **or** ☐ **"Have Concerns"**

STANDARD 4. MATCHING OPERAITONS WITH THE MISSION SERVING STUDENTS

Item 3: Standard 4.3 – Support for Students

Standard 4.3 states, "The program will ensure the availability of support services, such as curriculum advising, internship placement and supervision, career counseling, and job placement assistance to enable students to progress in careers in public affairs, administration, and policy."

The Commission **seeks evidence** that all students will have at least one experiential learning exercise and/or interaction with practitioners to ensure that students learn to apply their education. Internship participation should align with the program's mission.

The Commission **requests** a fuller description of how the program defines professional work experience and clarification of the exemptions granted to the 31% of students who did not complete an internship. Elsewhere in the self-study report the program (in the self-study year) enrolled significantly more preservice students than in-service. Does the program typically waive internships for some students classified as preservice? Were these students required to have work experience specific to the field of public policy or would any post-baccalaureate work would suffice?

Further, related to the discussion in Item 2, the Commission **requests** the Site Visit Team explore with the program how the its internship participation and opportunities align with its mission to develop public and nonprofit leaders.

Standard 4.3 Status ☐ Cited by COPRA

Standard 4.3 Comments

The Site Visit Team…

Status (Choose One): ☐ **"Have No Concerns"** **or** ☐ **"Have Concerns"**

STANDARD 5. MATCHING OPERATIONS WITH THE MISSION: STUDENT LEARNING

Item 4: Standard 5.1 – Universal Required Competencies

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The Commission **seeks evidence** of systematic assessment of student learning to demonstrate the program is taking action to ensure the attainment of, and improve performance with respect to, student competency across the entire curriculum.

The Commission **requests** the program provide further information on: why the Capstone projects and exit survey were chosen as measures; how they specifically relate to the student learning outcomes defined by the program for the chosen cultural universal competency; and the systematic process by which the faculty analyzed these measures to determine areas for programmatic improvement. Specifically, how did the program determine the inadequacy of the cultural competency learning outcomes and how does it plan to address this?

Standard 5.1 Status ☐ Cited by COPRA

Standard 5.1 Comments

The Site Visit Team…

Status (Choose One): ☐ **"Have No Concerns"** **or** ☐ **"Have Concerns"**

SECTION 4 Commendations and Recommendations

In this section, the site visit team may commend the program on outstanding efforts and accomplishments and may recommend actions to strengthen the program. First, within the framework of peer review and accreditation (and without compromising the judgment to be made by COPRA), it is appropriate for the SVT to identify items that are well done or that are innovative in the field. This recognition of attainments and successes can add to the items covered in the review of standards.

Second, the site visit team may develop recommendations or suggestions which it believes will strengthen the program. These recommendations should flow from the mission of the program (and should avoid personal views of how things should be done.)

Commendations

The Site Visit Team commends the program for …

1.

2.

3.

Recommendations

The Site Visit Team recommends…

1.

2.

3.