

The logo features a large blue '40' with 'YEARS OF EXCELLENCE' in red below it, and '1977 - 2017' in red at the bottom. A vertical grey line is to the right of the '40'.

40
YEARS OF EXCELLENCE
1977 - 2017

The title 'NASPAA Standards colloquium' is displayed in red and blue text. 'NASPAA' and 'Standards' are in red, while 'colloquium' is in blue script. A faint world map is in the background.

NASPAA
Standards
colloquium

Dear Colleagues,

Later this summer, NASPAA will launch a two-year-long series of Standards Colloquia, which will be led by Standards Committee Chair Chandler Stolp and the NASPAA Executive Council. The purpose of these colloquia is to gather NASPAA members to discuss our standards, the latest iteration of which was adopted in 2009. Since then, 197 programs have been newly accredited or reaccredited under those standards. Much has changed since 2009. The question facing us today is: How have our accreditation standards held up?

When we last convened a set of conversations about standards en route to finalizing the 2009 document, the Standards Committee developed a draft and asked for comment. Those standards represented a dramatic change from the prior standards. They emphasized outcomes rather than inputs, they made each institution's mission central to the assessment of outcomes, and the standards themselves were promulgated with flexibility in mind. Programs were (and are) given the option of multiple pathways toward showing that the instructional program successfully marries the standards and the institution's mission.

We're taking a different tack as we approach ten years under the new standards because we very much want to hear from the membership about whether you would like to see any evolutionary– or revolutionary– changes in the standards in the years ahead. CHEA (the “accreditor of the accreditors”) recommends review of standards on a roughly decennial basis, so now is high time to begin this conversation among NASPAA members. While you are all free to raise any issue in colloquium, we seek your input on two topics in particular.

1) Global accreditation. When the 2009 standards were adopted, NASPAA accredited exclusively in the United States. Today our membership includes institutions in more than 20 nations and we have accredited 197 programs in 6 nations. Are the current standards equal to this task? Do we need to do anything to recognize more explicitly our role as a global accrediting body?

2) New developments in our field. Big Data projects were but a gleam in the eye in 2009; they are now predicating robust analyses of policies and programs around the world. Mobile computing, hand-held devices, the growth of natural language artificial intelligence, a pattern of disinvestment from the public sector, greater integration of the global economy, the growing power of some domestic and international NGOs, the use of simulations and adaptive learning software in the classroom: these are all developments that either entirely post-date or have gathered significant steam since 2009. Do our standards adequately account for these and other developments?

Our purpose here is not to be comprehensive, but provocative. While NASPAA does much more than accreditation, assurance of learning remains one of our most important and visible functions. In making judgments about programmatic capacity, COPRA needs to be armed with standards that fully comprehend the diverse ambitions of our member institutions. We need your help to make sure that they do.

So please be on the lookout for a colloquium scheduled for your region sometime between now and early 2019. As always, we appreciate your good thinking and all the contributions you make to ensuring that we have the best standards for ensuring high quality education for public and third sector leaders.

Sincerely,

David Birdsell

NASPAA President