

Discussion of Criteria for Participation in Accreditation Review Activities including BIR Training

Overview of this Report

This agenda item begins a discussion about the criteria and expectations of those who offer to participate in the Commission's accreditation activities.

Staff Recommendation

This item is for action. Any direction the COA wishes to give will be incorporated into guidelines for training and participation of accreditation activities.

Background

The Commission's accreditation system is highly dependent on individuals with expertise in educator preparation volunteering to attend trainings and calibration sessions, participate in document review, and participate as team members in accreditation site visits. The Commission's primary manner of training a cadre of individuals to conduct accreditation activities is through a periodic training, called the Board of Institutional Review (BIR) training. These trainings are conducted two to four times a year and currently involve the completion of five on-line training modules, followed by two full days of face to face training with an experienced team lead and Commission staff. In addition, participation in face-to-face program assessment or initial program review involves completion of an online training followed by a 30 – 40 minute calibration exercise.

The vast number of individuals participating in BIR training, in IPR activities, PA activities, and accreditation site visits have experience with California educator preparation programs. BIR training requires an application process which includes a nomination process as well as a resume verifying the applicant's expertise and experience in California public schools. Individuals are accepted based on their application. With respect to program assessment and IPR, many individuals have completed BIR training, but others have not. The need has been so great for reviewers that the Commission has not required an application process. To date, this process has worked well.

Recently, however, individuals have sought to participate in accreditation activities whose institution has not had an established relationship with the Commission and/or whose qualifications and involvement in California K-12 educator preparation programs are less clear. In addition, individuals have sought to participate with the primary purpose of benefiting their program rather than contributing to accreditation activities. While the Commission has touted one benefit of participating in accreditation activities as being able to assist one's own institution with preparing well written, clear documents and to better understand a reviewer's perspective, these purposes are a secondary outcome rather than the primary purpose of training and participation.

Commission staff has two primary concerns:

- 1) Using state resources to train individuals who may or may not participate in accreditation activities in the future.
- 2) The need to ensure that those who are entrusted to review documents or serve on site visit teams and make decisions about standards are qualified to do so and have a firm understanding of California's preparation standards.

Commission staff recommend that documentation provided on-line and in training make more clear the expectations that once an individual is trained, that they will participate in the system and that, although there are benefits to one's own institution and program, that the primary purpose is to serve as a volunteer in the Commission's accreditation system. Second, Commission staff recommends that the COA discuss what kind of criteria and expectations should be explicit for individuals participating in document review such as experience in a California educator preparation program or understanding of California program standards. Commission staff seeks COA input on these criteria.

Specific questions for the COA to discuss include

- 1) Should there be explicit expectations for individuals who complete BIR training such as participate in a minimum of 1 Commission accreditation activity (IPR, PA or serve on a site visit team) within a specified time period after completing the BIR Training?
- 2) Should there be an explicit expectation that individuals in the BIR serve annually, except in case of hardship, in a minimum of one accreditation activity?
- 3) Should individuals who are not affiliated with a Commission-approved program sponsor and are not a K-12 practitioner be accepted into BIR training only after all applicants who are affiliated with a Commission-approved sponsor or are K-12 practitioners?
- 4) Should there be a time frame, such as 3 or 5 years, during which an individual who completed BIR training but has not served in any capacity in the Commission's accreditation system, that the individual is removed from the BIR?
- 5) Should there be an expectation that institutions approved to sponsor educator preparation by the Commission are required to provide individuals who will be trained to participate in accreditation activities and serve as readers or site visit team members?

Next Steps

Direction from COA will be incorporated into information provided to individuals interested in participating in accreditation activities and trainings. Criteria and expectations will be included on the Commission's website and materials provided at trainings and accreditation activities.