

CORE *News*

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President's Update



Tom Evenson, CORE President

Optimistic Future

Linda Shaw, our immediate Past-President, opened her initial President's column in the *CORE Newsletter* by wondering if anyone's term had ever started with "as big a bang" as hers did. Probably not...and the good news is that no one's term has started with that level of "excitement" since she started her terms. Of course, Linda was referring to the fact that

CORE was in the middle of determining whether we should merge with CACREP. It is with some relief that I can say that I have no "bangs" of that magnitude happening with CORE at this time. However, there are some important things going on that you may want to stay on top of as this accreditation body moves forward. I will try to briefly update you and you will undoubtedly encounter more detail on some of these areas in other parts of the *Newsletter*.

CORE Standards Review

First, and perhaps most important, is the fact that CORE is undergoing a very thorough review and update of its Standards for Accreditation. CORE policy adopted many years ago calls on us to do this every five years and we have always taken it very seriously. This time Paul Leung, University of North Texas, and Amos Sales, University of Arizona, are co-chairing the review process. They have had strong support from Chris Reid, Virginia Commonwealth University; Nancy Crew, Michigan State University; and Cherie King, Central Connecticut State University. In addition to a

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thorough review of existing standards, you will see that the committee has focused extensively on three important objectives that include: 1) developing standards of existing research based on standards of practice; 2) streamlining the standards and minimizing redundancy within them; and 3) developing student learning outcomes that allow programs to more objectively demonstrate the quality of student preparation.

You are going to find that the committee's efforts have made CORE's standards even stronger. But... their work is not complete. The second draft is on the CORE website and the committee is at the point where it is **dependent** on careful review and input from those who have a vested interest in how these standards will come out. A project like this one necessarily starts with a small group that is willing to take an almost microscopic look at the standards. But they are only five people and must rely on the broad perspective of constituents to ensure a fully comprehensive and effective project.

In addition to sharing specific comments and recommendations relevant to points of most importance to you, it is important that you participate in what will be a convenient on-line survey that the Committee will be distributing in December that allows you to identify standards that you consider to be: a) "Essential" (e.g., programs must do this—or they should not be accredited); b) "Best Practices" (e.g., programs should do this); c) "Example" (e.g., this is a good idea, but only one way to achieve what is needed); and d) "Unnecessary" (e.g., this should be removed from the accreditation standards). The committee has made a concerted effort to be

comprehensive without being overly prescriptive. That can be a fine line sometimes and so, while opinions will undoubtedly vary among us, the survey is designed to provide CORE, the Commission and site reviewers with a dimension on what is collectively considered to be most important within the standards.

CHEA Recognition and the New Undergraduate Commission

Just so you don't feel so all alone if you happen to be going through an accreditation review, you will be interested in another important CORE focus at this time. Marvin Kuehn, Executive Director, has been focused on preparing CORE'S Recognition Re-application for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA); it must be submitted every ten years. In addition, you may recall that CORE, at its July 2008 annual meeting, moved the Committee on Undergraduate Education to Commission status and authorized initiation of a plan for accreditation of rehabilitation services programs at the undergraduate level. A goal in establishing this new Commission is to begin accrediting undergraduate rehabilitation education programs. To accomplish this, CORE must submit a change in scope of its mission to CHEA for approval.

CORE's strategic planning committee on Undergraduate Issues has been working with the new Commission to develop that plan and to prepare materials and documents necessary as part of CORE's recognition process with CHEA.

The recognition process is a comprehensive effort that requires CORE to demonstrate its compliance with CHEA's standards and, while the work falls primarily on Marv and the CORE

In addition, you may recall that CORE, at its July 2008 annual meeting, moved the Committee on Undergraduate Education to Commission status and authorized initiation of a plan for accreditation of rehabilitation services programs at the undergraduate level.

Board, its results are as important to member programs as their CORE accreditation is to students in their programs. You will hear more about the progress on the re-application as it is a two-year process requiring written justification and a site visit at an annual decision-making meeting of CORE.

CORE Administrative Costs

Of some interest to many is the fact that CORE was informed earlier this year that it had been getting a pretty good deal over the past several years for administrative services. The 2005 contract we had with the Foundation for Rehabilitation Education and Research (FRER) was replicated with the Consortium for Professional Credentialing (CPC) last year when we moved with that organization. In June, CPC informed us that we were only being charged slightly more than half of our total costs for services that they were providing to us. To make a long story short, our administrative costs needed to be increased from \$36,000/year to \$60,400/year. This was a jolt, but CORE recognized the discrepancy in costs vs. payment and has agreed to continue working with CPC at this time. The relationship with personnel at CPC is both historical and valued and CORE's partnership with them has many advantages. Still, to diligently respond to CORE's best interests, a committee chaired by Patty Nunez, CORE Treasurer, is investigating possible alternatives for the administrative services contract for the longer term or whether CPC is the best fit for CORE.

Strategic Planning Committees

Strategic planning sometimes results in the establishment of committees that start out with enthusiasm in the planning phase to accomplish good things, but frequently lose momentum

when it's time for detailed action. Under Linda Shaw's direction, CORE has avoided that potential pitfall through six separate committees that include: a) Marketing and Branding; b) Undergraduate Issues; c) Program Review; d) Expanding CORE's Scope; e) Program Outcomes Assessment; and f) CORE Consultation Committee. These six areas summarize strategic priorities toward which much CORE energy has been, and will continue to be, invested during the current year. Each of the committees has continued pursuit of original objectives that were established in response to the specific charge it received as part of the strategic planning process. The Program Review Committee and the Program Outcomes Assessment Committee have played critical roles in contributing to the progress of the standards review process.

Completing the Standards Review process, development of the Undergraduate Commission, and successful submission of our reaccreditation application to CHEA are major activities to be addressed.

Legal Consultation

CORE made an important change to its structure in July with the addition of a Legal Advisor to CORE. Over the past several years, we have had the advantage of Mr. Bill Courtney's service as a Public Member of CORE. Bill's term recently ended and we knew that there was a chance for a void in the quality of legal and financial guidance to CORE that we had gotten used to receiving from him. To address this we invited him to continue on in the capacity of legal advisor to CORE and he has agreed to assume that role because of his interest in and commitment to rehabilitation education. We are fortunate to have him.

Summary

The past year has been fast...but productive. The success of CORE and the Graduate Standards Commission is evidenced through the many significant changes and issues that have been addressed. Through its committees, CORE is looking ahead and examining issues and

prioritizing tasks that may be extremely important for accredited programs and our graduates in the future. Completing the Standards Review process, development of the Undergraduate Commission, and successful submission of our re-accreditation application to CHEA are major activities to be addressed. Each of these goals, as well as the work of the committees, will be advanced more quickly and thoroughly if CORE has the benefit of your input on issues that are of particular interest to you and other faculty of CORE sanctioned rehabilitation programs.

Importance of Student Learning Outcomes

*Marvin D. Kuehn
Executive Director, CORE*

The following comments are offered as a summary position statement for CORE that reflects the philosophy and rationale supporting comprehensive student learning outcomes for CORE accredited programs. The purpose of this statement is to increase awareness of the importance of examining outcome data and evidence provided during an accreditation review and to facilitate assessments about compliance with an accreditation standard. In particular, focus is directed to the outcome information provided to CORE in response to standards in Section C of CORE Standards. **CORE seeks to communicate more clearly the learning outcomes to be demonstrated by graduates. Attainment of these outcomes serve as the indicators that graduates have demonstrated compliance with program standards.**

Standards that form the foundation of a professional discipline include a variety of components. They are evaluated in several ways, depending on the purpose of the standards and relation to the overall objectives of the accreditation process. Standards established by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) for the recognition of Masters degree programs in rehabilitation counseling involve six

essential components: (1) the mission and objectives of academic programs; (2) program self-assessment and program evaluation; (3) academic curriculum, knowledge domains, and student learning outcomes; (4) clinical experience; (5) administration and faculty; and (6) program support and resources.

Evidence that academic programs address the standards and that students achieve the learning outcomes outlined in these components can be provided in several ways. CORE has a long history of requiring evidence of compliance through such sources as specific written data, program brochures and related promotional information, institution reports, objective survey results, internship manuals, meeting minutes, personal interviews, and comprehensive site visits in which written or narrative information can be validated and confirmed.

Of particular concern for program recognition (accreditation) is the criticism in higher education that many institutions and programs have not clearly documented (provided evidence of) the results

Assessment of student learning outcomes has become an important issue, as it has become a major priority for evaluating accreditation effectiveness of academic programs, as well as a focus for professional accreditation organizations like CORE.

of educational efforts. A major issue communicated by those who have criticized higher education suggests that programs have not expected students to demonstrate the skills and knowledge obtained during their academic experience. Institutions and programs have not adequately addressed what graduates should be able to do upon graduation. What outcomes can graduates perform or articulate? Are institutions/programs communicating expectations clearly and focusing on outcomes that are achieved or demonstrated? Unfortunately, the evidence needed to determine compliance with outcome standards has not always included a consistent or thorough review of assessment criteria. A major challenge is how to state outcomes/expectations and then measure/assess them to see if the outcomes have been reached.

During the past year, CORE has been working on revising professional accreditation standards for Masters degree programs in rehabilitation counseling. One element of this revision process is to more clearly articulate expected learning outcomes which are derived from research-based knowledge domains essential for professional rehabilitation counselors. It has been a challenge to modify existing standards while remaining cognizant of the importance of the assessment of outcomes necessary for professional academic preparation at the Masters level. Assessment of student learning outcomes has become an important issue, as it has become a major priority for evaluating accreditation effectiveness of academic programs, as well as a focus for professional accreditation organizations like CORE.

Assessment and compliance with standards has now begun to re-focus on evidence and what should be considered as objective measures of

skill and knowledge acquisition. Statements about outcomes in course syllabi and survey results from students and graduates are vulnerable to bias and questionable interpretations and may not reflect sufficient evidence of compliance with standards. CORE has always cautioned reviewers not to accept undocumented narrative comments, or comments of text from federal grant applications or other sources that do not include clear references.

A focus of site visitor training for CORE in the next two years will be helping site reviewers to identify acceptable evidence for making assessments about compliance to individual standards. For example, statements (by themselves) in course syllabi are not considered acceptable evidence that learning outcomes have been obtained by graduates. Syllabi may indicate the goals or expectations of a course, but other indicators of outcomes (performance or

demonstrations of ability to apply, explain, communicate, etc.) are more appropriate measures for outcome assessment. Also included in the broad category of “desirable evidence” is information obtained via personal interviews with students, graduates, and faculty during a site visit. Congruence among these groups, along with expectations in course syllabi and survey data from previous students in a program about the preparation they received, would seem to provide a more valid measure of the success of instruction and related educational experiences afforded graduates.

The site visit is a critical element in the review process, as it permits reviewers to examine information provided in the Self-study Document that may be unclear, and to assess other efforts to meet outcome-oriented

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standards. Experienced reviewers are knowledgeable about standards that are difficult for programs to address; reviewers are often skilled at asking appropriate follow-up questions to clarify information or statements provided during a site visit that are vague, unclear, or missing in materials submitted in Self-study Documents.

Accreditation decisions must include a thorough review of various sources of supportive evidence such as course syllabi, written policy and procedural documents, feedback from graduates and students, and personal interviews with program and institutional representatives. CORE must also demonstrate that accreditation decisions are based on comprehensive assessment of compliance with standards that is supported by achievement of student learning outcomes.

Annual Report of the Executive Director

Marvin D. Kuehn

This report summarizes the activities and responsibilities of the Executive Director and the accomplishments of CORE during the last 12 months. Much of my time is spent in answering questions via the phone or email, clarifying standards, assisting various committees of CORE, and preparing communications to individuals and professional organizations. Sue Denys, Administrative Assistant in the CORE Office and I focused our efforts on promoting greater understanding of issues, addressing administrative concerns and organizational policy, monitoring the accreditation review process, and updating the CORE website.

The past six months have been hectic but I believe the efforts of many CORE and Commission members have resulted in several significant accomplishments and have allowed for the identification of some important goals and positive outcomes that will enhance the success of CORE in the future.

Standards Review Project

Under the leadership of Dr. Paul Leung and Dr. Amos Sales, the comprehensive review process and the timetable for the project were announced in October 2008. The project invited interested individuals to complete a comprehensive survey on current CORE Standards; the initial survey period ended on December 15. Even though the survey response was a little disappointing, the Committee received additional input in April and May, 2009. A number of important issues and standards were identified that the Standards Review Committee (SRC) has reviewed during 2009. Changes in the Standards were also submitted in October at the NCRE Conference in Washington, DC. Dr. Sales and Dr. Leung, co-chairs of the SRC, will continue to receive reactions and further suggestions until June 1, 2010, as the Committee works to prepare a final Draft #3 of CORE Accreditation Standards. A revised timetable for the project has been modified and is posted on the CORE website.

CHEA Report and Development of Undergraduate Commission

After the by-laws were changed in August 2008 regarding the general structure of the new undergraduate Commission, information was obtained from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) regarding procedures to change the current recognized scope of accreditation of CORE that would permit the accreditation of undergraduate rehabilitation education programs. Having prepared the interim 5-Year Report of CORE for CHEA in 2006, CORE knows how much time it took and how many revisions had to be made before the final interim report was submitted. In visiting on the phone with CHEA representatives it is very obvious that two concerns of CHEA will be: (1) why and what the relationship will be with existing graduate accreditation procedures, i.e. rationale and explanations of how the structure of current accreditation efforts will be influenced or changed, and (2) why undergraduate program accreditation is needed.

CHEA representatives are likely to ask things like: What is an undergraduate rehabilitation program? How is it different from graduate programs? How many programs desire accreditation and why? These are the types of questions CORE anticipates it will have to provide good answers to for CHEA approval to change the scope of CORE. The real challenge is to develop clear written rationale for a change in the scope of CORE that will be acceptable to CHEA.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

A significant challenge that many of you are undoubtedly aware of is the emphasis that is being communicated to universities from national accrediting groups like CHEA, NCATE, and the Department of Education on assessment and student learning outcomes. There has been a lot of criticism of accreditation organizations by the Department of Education about how standards are ASSESSED. Academic programs have been good at collecting data but have not been very convincing with traditional assessment approaches at measuring competency, dispositions, and outcomes.

What are students learning and how do we know that? How are critical thinking, analytical reasoning, written communication, and problem resolution concepts being emphasized in curricula? This last question is an example of a question CHEA may ask CORE to articulate in our recognition application. This question was communicated to CORE in November by a staff member from CHEA.

A major change has been proposed by the Standards Review Committee of CORE for Section C of CORE Standards. The new proposed format articulates the Standards in a different manner so that programs seeking accreditation may need to re-focus curriculum expectations to student learning outcomes to demonstrate compliance with CORE Standards. The new format would illustrate how outcomes should be stated so the expectations are clear and emphasizes that outcomes should be linked to KNOWLEDGE domains in each of the 10

curriculum areas of Section C of CORE Standards.

Administrative Services

The administrative office of CORE has been in the Chicago area for over 30 years. Recently CORE was informed that, due to rising expenses, the 2009 contract with the Consortium for Professional Credentialing (CPC) for personnel services and related administrative expenses would need to change. The increase in costs was significant and unexpected. CORE has had a long and successful history of services from organizations providing administrative support to CORE. Due to cost increases, CORE is considering possible options for obtaining management services from another source, possibly not in the Chicago area. Tom Evenson has provided additional information about this topic in his comments in this issue of the CORE News.

CRCC/CORE Partnership Work

Efforts continue to identify states where licensure laws appear to discriminate against professional counselors who only possess the CRC credential and do not accept CORE accreditation as equivalent to CACREP accreditation. This is an important effort and the collaboration is time-consuming. Linda Shaw, Immediate Past President of CORE has worked closely with Cindy Chapman at CRCC as this project has evolved. An update on partnership activities is provided on page 13 in this issue of the CORE News.

Improving Accreditation Reviews

Overall, it has been a good year from an administrative perspective. I am convinced that both the Commission and the CORE Board are doing a better job, each year, in editing reports, and CORE is improving preparation of site reviewers with updated site visitor training. Unfortunately, some "older reviewers" have not participated in new training that emphasizes (1) questions/information where follow-up is

needed during a site visit, and (2) the preparation (writing) of site visitor reports. Revision of the Site-visitor Training Manual resulted in improved understanding of what is expected in accreditation reports and will help site reviewers, the Commission, and CORE in making accreditation decisions in the future. Developing consistency in accreditation reviews is a challenge as CORE does not want to be too prescriptive. New guidelines were approved in July 2009 to help in writing comments for Preliminary Review Committee Reports. These Guidelines have been incorporated into the Site Visit Manual and are reviewed each year after the Annual CORE Meeting. These concerns have been a major focus of the Program Review Committee which was established last year; it has been facilitated by Dr. Cherie King, Chair of the Commission on Standards and Accreditation.

Expanded Site Visitor Training

This was held in October 2009 in Washington, DC at the Fall NCRE/CSAVR/RSA Conference. The delivery of training opportunities has been successful in the past; however, it was felt that CORE needed to examine/evaluate the learning that occurs or outcomes of our efforts to be sure we are enhancing the mission of CORE accredited programs in the most effective manner. Based on feedback during the annual meeting in July 2009, it was decided that the Commission and CORE need to re-examine several issues related to the writing of site visit reports. The concept of developing an Academy of Site Reviewers that provides meaningful recognition to reviewers has been suggested as one factor to increase recognition of the contributions of site reviewers.

Website Update

The CORE website is continually updated and a slightly different format was adopted to minimize major changes in the future. It is information-driven and is not “glitzy” nor does it include pictures, etc. CORE has learned a little about the problems in transferring a webpage from one university to another and the issues that have to be resolved. A major accomplishment was completion of the update

of the Accreditation Manual which became available on the website on January 7, 2009. There is still narrative and information that needs to be written and edited, and progress is being made on these tasks.

Information About Rehabilitation Counseling and CORE

Revision of two components of the Health Professions Career and Education Directory related to rehabilitation counseling were completed in January 2009. Information was submitted on (1) the history, structure, and purpose of CORE; and (2) background about the history, job description, employment characteristics and outlook, and education programs that prepare professional rehabilitation counselors. Some data from old directories was almost 20 years old; it is hoped these revisions present a more up-to-date picture of CORE and rehabilitation counseling. In addition, in November 2009, CORE decided to participate in the AMA project on demographic information of related Allied Health Programs. This will involve a comprehensive survey of rehabilitation counseling programs that will complement the current Annual Program Progress Data Report now used by CORE.

Accreditation Status - On Probation

Last year the question was raised about creating another accreditation status for accredited programs that should perhaps be placed on probation. CORE did not have a status for this purpose nor a written process for how CORE would conduct a formal review of a program when there is information that indicates the program may not be in compliance with CORE standards. Information has been obtained from some other ASPA member organizations on how these organizations handle these types of issues. Several major elements were presented for the policy. It was approved by CORE this past year and includes three main areas: (1) why a probation status might be appropriate, (2) the meaning of substantial complaints, and (3) procedures for reporting and acting on

substantial program changes. These policies are now included in the updated Accreditation Manual on the CORE website.

Website Accessibility Interpretation

This year two program coordinators requested clarification on the expectations of CORE on the last sentence of Standard A.1 which states: **“These statements shall be in accessible format and meet national website accessibility standards.”** The question seemed to revolve around what evidence the program needs to provide. The response which follows outlines the policy of CORE; it was adopted in January of 2009.

“Various website evaluation tools can be used to determine if websites are in compliance with national guidelines. The issue is whether individuals who may have a disability can access all aspects of a particular website. Some tools are very good at identifying what is not accessible while others are very general and only tell the user what is not in compliance with Section 508. Two websites/tools that are frequently used include: www.cynthiasays.com and <http://webxact.watchfire.com>. Two additional sites are: www.jimthatcher.com and www.webaim.org/standards/508.”

The determination of program accessibility usually occurs during the site visit when reviewers meet with a university or program webmaster. Reviewers are simply encouraged to ask for a demonstration of program website accessibility.

Electronic Self-Study Preparation

CORE adopted a policy that programs could submit the SSD electronically (on-line), but it was decided that CORE needed to develop some specific written guidelines to assist programs in

preparation. Feedback from a few site visitors who have reviewed CD discs indicates that it saves space but in many cases “hard copy” may still be needed so materials can be compared and reviewed quickly. Information on disc ties a reviewer to a computer as hard copy is not available. Related to the Self-Study is the conversion from hard copy of survey response data to on-line survey responses to increase efficiency and save staff time and resources.

The question to be resolved is when the conversion should occur, in light of the Standards Review Project. Making the changes in the process will take some time and careful planning will be crucial. Until the work of the Standards Review Committee is completed, it is necessary to delay the conversion of survey responses to an on-line format until 2011.

Evaluation of Site Reviewers

During the past year, concerns were noted from some program coordinators about the performance/competence of site reviewers. CORE asks program coordinators and faculty for an evaluation of the review process and the preparation and feedback provided by the site reviewers, whether the recommendations received were helpful, and if the reviewers were fair, impartial, and cordial. Last year it was recommended that the site visitor evaluation form be reviewed and that the Executive Director, in consultation with the CORE Administrative Assistant, provide appropriate constructive feedback to site visitors about their reports, the

site visit, the evaluation comments of program faculty during the site visit, and comments from the other site reviewer on their preparation and contributions during the site visit. It is hoped the feedback process could be seen as educational and constructive rather than critical or adversarial. Feedback would not be shared with site reviewers until after the final

Website Accessibility Tools

www.cynthiasays.com

<http://webxact.watchfire.com>

www.jimthatcher.com

www.webaim.org/standards/508

accreditation decision is made by CORE. Providing constructive feedback to reviewers is a challenge. Making what is expected of reviewers clear and the continuation of procedural reminders to them should improve the evaluation of the process and reviewers.

Marketing an Accredited Program

A concern has arisen about accredited programs advertising both on-line and campus-based degree programs at one institution (an on-campus program and a distance education program). CORE accredits a rehabilitation counseling program for the institution and not a campus or satellite program. Several accredited programs at institutions offer distance education courses or collaborative courses at more than one site. CORE does require that if the rehabilitation counseling program is offered at more than one site that the program provided must be the same as the “on-campus” program. All CORE Standards apply to both programs including faculty qualifications, practicums, internships, program evaluation, graduate requirements, and curriculum, etc.

An institution may advertise that they offer an accredited program in rehabilitation counseling. If the program is offered and advertised to be available on two separate campuses, they must be the same length, and meet all the accreditation standards of the on-campus program. There can be only one accredited RC program per university. CORE does not accredit the “delivery” (face-to-face or distance education/on-line) of a program. The academic model (cohorts or open enrollment programs) for delivering courses may be different.

New Applications for Accreditation

New applications were received this year from two programs in Puerto Rico and a new program at South Dakota State University. Another application is anticipated from the University of Texas-El Paso in the near future.



Topics for Future Consideration?

Emphasis on Program Consultation

One topic that CORE may address in the future is exploration of ways to provide more consultative assistance to programs versus only program evaluation. Other national accreditation organizations are discussing this initiative as well. Efforts to provide more consultation service would be consistent with the mission of CORE and provide substantive assistance in helping programs improve the quality and scope of their programs. The focus of suggestions must include options or alternatives, not just an opinion. In the past there has been reluctance to provide suggestions to programs; site visitors have not been encouraged to offer “consultation” as it can be interpreted as bias. Some feel this could be of significant value to programs who want assistance/suggestions to improve curricula and policies. The reluctance may be the lack of guidance by CORE on how constructive consultation (feedback) can be provided without invoking fear or criticism by program faculty members of reviewers.

Interpretation of Standard E.5

Standard E.5 refers to full-time RCE program faculty. Do part-time RCE program faculty or adjunct faculty have to meet all the E.5 substandards?

It appears that more and more programs are hiring faculty who can teach in multiple programs in a department (other Masters degree programs or both graduate and undergraduate rehabilitation programs). Some of the faculty appear not to be certified (nationally Certified Rehabilitation Counselors) but are licensed, sometimes as counselors and sometimes as psychologists. Does CORE need to provide more guidance to programs and site visitors on what is expected regarding the qualifications of

faculty involved in a program or do CORE Standards need revision?

Questions About Distance Education Programs

Should the qualifications specified by CORE for part-time, adjunct, and full-time faculty teaching in either on-campus or distance education (on-line) programs be the same? ***In January 2007, CORE passed a policy that all faculty teaching for a program must have obtained the CRC or provide rationale or justification for faculty not possessing the CRC.*** Should additional curriculum questions be asked during the site visit? If so, what? Are there other ramifications related to practicum and internship standards for on-line programs? Shouldn't the requirements be the same as for an on-campus course? If CORE accredits a program, is the delivery of the program an issue? In the past, CORE has said it is not.

Qualifications of Program Coordinator

Another topic that has resulted in questions is related to Standards E.4 and E.5. One of the most frequently asked questions about program coordination is: Does a program coordinator need to be a full-time faculty member working with the program? Or, could a program have two faculty sharing the responsibility or one part-time faculty member in the RCE program serving as coordinator? CORE discussed this question in January 2009 and agreed that shared responsibility for program coordination could be acceptable.

Reorganization of RCE Programs

In the last six months, there have been inquiries asking about whether a program can continue to be accredited if it becomes a track in another

degree program (e.g., a track in a mental health counseling degree program). Are there any negative implications? CORE currently accredits a number of programs that do not have the words "rehabilitation counseling" in the degree. Are current requirements to be accredited by CORE appropriate or should they be re-visited? Why are institutions considering this option? Is the number of students interested in rehabilitation counseling declining? With the emphasis on licensure, are employment options changing?

Summary

The future of CORE will be determined by the commitment of TIME and vision by individuals that serve on the Commissions and CORE. ***The importance of the Standards Review Project cannot be viewed as another routine activity. The Standards which result from the project will be critical to the perception of rehabilitation counseling programs. The benefits from updated standards will result in greater acceptance by the broader counseling field and rehabilitation counseling professionals that provide specialized (disability related) counseling services.***

The success and relevance of the two Commissions and CORE are only possible if the leadership and members are provided up-to-date information and are knowledgeable about the issues that influence the accreditation process and program accreditation decisions. CORE had outstanding leadership from Linda Shaw, CORE President for the first part of the year. Tom Evenson, current President who assumed this position in July 2009, has continued providing vision, focus, and commitment.

I trust this report has provided you with information regarding what has been happening, what CORE has identified to be the major issues

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for the accreditation of programs, and what might need to occur to maintain a viable, pro-active accreditation organization.

Update: New Undergraduate Commission of CORE

David C. Perry, Ph.D., CRC

The Committee on Undergraduate Education (CUE) has been very busy these last few months working on standards and policies related to accreditation of undergraduate programs in rehabilitation and disability studies. As most of you know, CORE recently approved the development of an undergraduate commission of CORE which replaces the old Committee on Undergraduate Education. There are many reasons that accrediting undergraduate programs makes sense for our profession. Most importantly, we believe that it will improve and enhance the quality of services to persons with disabilities. In addition, there are benefits to universities, to students, to graduate programs and employers.

Advantages for Universities

- Acknowledges programs that prepare students for professionally recognized standards of practice
- Provides an external indication of quality of curriculum and program
- Supports and acknowledges the value of undergraduate programs in rehabilitation and disability studies
- Adds overall credibility to programs
- Assists with recruitment of quality students and faculty
- Enhances grant and external funding capabilities

Advantages for Students

- Lends greater credibility and respect to their earned degree
- Makes a rehabilitation degree more competitive with other human service degrees
- Indicates to credentialing bodies that students have met professional preparation standards
- Parents/family members see that students are earning a viable degree
- Students identify more strongly with the rehabilitation profession
- Promotes professionalism of graduates

Advantages for Graduate Programs and Employers

- Acknowledges that students have graduated from a quality undergraduate program
- Offers a way of establishing equivalency provisions for advanced standing in master's programs
- Provides assurance of appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes in rehabilitation and disability studies
- Enhances training in ethics, legislation, interaction skills with people with disabilities, assistive technology, and disability culture
- Promotes an attitude of professionalism in employment settings

At the CORE Board meeting last summer, CUE was asked to begin preparing rationale for a "change in scope of accreditation of CORE." A statement articulating the reasons for expanding the scope of accreditation must be submitted to CHEA before undergraduate programs can be accredited. Another goal for the Commission is to make the commission a more representative body, similar in design to CORE's commission on graduate education. A work group was assigned to this issue and will be recommending a 12-15 person Commission whose members are appointed by CORE and sponsored by organizations that are supportive of bachelor's-level rehabilitation training. Over the next few months, these organizations will be contacted to

determine their interest and ability to sponsor commissioners at the undergraduate level.

Even though we are moving in the direction of accreditation of undergraduate programs, it should be remembered that we continue to have a registry of undergraduate programs in rehabilitation and disability studies. These are programs that have applied for and received approval of basic program and curricular standards. It is our intent to maintain the Undergraduate Registry for those programs which would prefer that level of recognition even if accreditation is offered. It is assumed the Registry will become a responsibility of the Undergraduate Commission. The Registry has grown to a total of 28 recognized undergraduate programs. These programs have completed self studies that provide in-depth descriptions of their programs. They also are required to provide annual update information of program changes and improvements. The newest programs, approved in July 2009, are Maryville University in St. Louis and Western New Mexico University.

A tremendous amount of work lies ahead of us. I want to personally thank all of the undergraduate educators and other interested professionals who have willingly accepted these challenges and are helping us move forward in the improvement of undergraduate rehabilitation and disability studies education. The new Undergraduate Commission of CORE plans to become a viable component of CORE in the future. As the Chair of the Commission, I look forward to the involvement of both undergraduate and graduate rehabilitation educators as we both broaden and strengthen rehabilitation education through formal accreditation of our undergraduate academic programs.

CORE/CRCC Partnership Efforts

CORE and the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) have been working in a collaborative process to advocate

for the recognition of rehabilitation counselors in settings for which they are qualified to practice. The following is a summary of current outreach activity to promote CORE generally and specifically to include recognition of CORE-accredited programs explicitly in state licensing regulation. In addition to responding to opportunities in all fifty states and the District of Columbia, CORE and CRCC have selected specific states for outreach, most recently working with members of CSAVR to identify state vocational rehabilitation directors who are interested in promoting recognition of both the CRC examination (CRCE) and CORE Standards.

Summary of Current Activity

District of Columbia

Continuing outreach efforts have been made to locate potential members for the District of Columbia's Board of Professional Counseling after heavy attrition last year. Once a quorum can be established, the Board will consider the proposed inclusion of the CRCE and CORE accreditation for licensure as a professional counselor.

Maine

CORE and CRCC representatives approached the Board of Counseling Professionals Licensure regarding proposed amendments to regulations for License Professional Counselors. While the Board cannot adopt the proposed changes now, staff from the Office of Licensing and Registration have recommended and encouraged CORE and CRCC to file separately for amendments to the current rules to incorporate the CRCE and CORE. We are currently reaching out to contacts in state to act as petitioners for the new rulemaking.

Nebraska

Comments were provided to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services on proposed rules concerning the licensing of independent mental health practitioners. The Department was requested to consider acceptance of the CRCE and CORE equivalents for licensure as mental health professionals or independent mental health professionals.

Currently, these rules are still under review but staff members have indicated that it is likely that additional legislation will be needed to enact the suggested changes.

New Jersey

The Department of Law and Public Safety's Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners has adopted rules that will specify CACREP graduate programs for all LPC applicants. This will be delayed three years. The new rules allow for licensure by endorsement and stipulates a broader educational requirement that could allow for CORE-accredited programs. Educational requirements for rehabilitation counselors will specify CORE accreditation, again delayed three years from the effective date of the rule change to obtain such accreditation.

Utah

CORE and CRCC representatives worked with Russ Thelin, Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services; Rich Oborn of the Department of Commerce Occupational and Professional Licensing; and others to develop rules implementing new legislation that created a separate license for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Prior to its adoption, they worked to successfully amend the underlying legislation to limit the license to rehabilitation counselors, narrow exclusions, and clarify that supervised experience for licensure must be related to rehabilitation counseling.

Based on positive interaction with the sponsor, Representative Ronda Rudd Menlove (R) and Don Uchida, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation in Utah, representatives were invited to participate in workgroup meetings and to submit comments on the proposed rules implementing the statute. As a result, both CORE and the CRCE were referenced specifically in proposed new regulations for the new Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor license. CORE's goal is to provide support to the new Vocational Rehabilitation Board while working with Mr. Thelin, Mr. Uchida, Representative Menlove, and others to add CRCE and CORE recognition for Licensed Professional Counselors.

Wyoming

The Wyoming Mental Health Professions Licensing Board specified CORE accreditation and approved the CRCE for licensure as a professional counselor as part of draft rule revisions last year. This Board had intended to publish the public notice prior to the meeting of the Wyoming Counseling Association on October 15, 2009, so that the amendments would be available for the Wyoming Counseling Association conference in October. A hearing and comments deadline will be announced with the publication of the proposed rules.

Importance of Site Reviewers

CORE has been fortunate over the years to have many capable qualified individuals volunteer to serve as accreditation site reviewers. All were expected to participate in site visitor training and to keep informed of changes in CORE standards and policy. Most reviewers see the benefits of the experience and enjoy the opportunity to learn how other programs address concerns, approach curriculum content, and evaluate student dispositions. While reviewers are not paid for their time, their expenses are covered by the programs they review, and they do have the opportunity to earn CRCC/CEU credits for the reviews they conduct.

Through site visitor training CORE attempts to assist review teams in addressing the challenges faced in preparing for the site visit and the concerns identified in the review of a Self-study Document and the actual on-site visit. The CORE administrative office and the Commission make clear the expectations of site visitors and the importance and responsibilities of their affirmative response if asked to serve on a site team. Unfortunately not all new site visitors are asked to serve in the first year after completing training. CORE sincerely appreciates the willingness of those who participated in the recent training in Washington, DC to learn more about the site visit process. Your contributions and interest will be valued when you are asked

to serve. We hope that all involved in the coming review in early 2010 have a meaningful experience.

CORE sincerely values the efforts and commitment of site reviewers who strive to objectively review the strengths and weaknesses of programs during the accreditation site visit process. Most reviewers turn challenges into valuable learning opportunities and experiences. At the same time they provide constructive feedback which assists in the improvement of the academic program they review. Individuals who might be interested in serving as an accreditation site reviewer should contact the CORE office to obtain information about eligibility to serve and the requirements necessary for selection as a reviewer.



Suggestions for CORE Standards

Anyone may submit suggestions for changes to CORE Standards. Revisions from Draft #2 have been posted on the CORE website along with the timeline for submission of additional feedback and questions.

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Membership Changes on the Graduate Commission and CORE

The following individuals were nominated and approved by CORE to serve on the Graduate Commission or CORE effective July 18, 2009:

New Members of CORE

- Susan Sherman, Public Member
- Frank Lane, Representative from ARCA replacing Linda Shaw

Graduate Commission

- No changes

Completing Service on CORE

- Linda Shaw, Representative and President from ARCA
- William Courtney, Public Member

Completing Service on the Graduate Commission

- No changes

Executive Committee of CORE

- President, Tom Evenson
- Vice-President, Chris Reid
- Secretary, Charlene Dryer
- Treasurer, Patricia Nunez
- Chair of Graduate Commission, Cherie King
- Past President, Linda Shaw
- Executive Director of CORE, Marv Kuehn (Ex-Officio, non-voting)