

The Treatment of Diversity in the Standards of the ASPA Membership

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Inspired by the question posed by a colleague about how accreditors treat *Diversity* in their standards, a content review was conducted to determine the manner in which the subject was addressed. For purposes of this investigation, the concept of diversity implies recognition of differences or unique attributes which entails dimensions of culture, race, ethnicity, creed, values, religion, geography, language, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical ability, education, vocation, learning style, etc.

One hundred thirty-four sets of standards representing 66 accreditors included on the April 2005 published list of the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) were analyzed. In the clear majority of cases, diversity was most frequently addressed in the standards dealing with Curriculum, Students, and Governance. In curriculum, the topic was presented in varying perspectives through courses, practica and internships. Recruitment of students and faculty purported race, ethnicity, gender and other requisites for admissions and hiring. Typically, standards mandated nondiscriminatory policies which were classified in the governance standard category. Only a few accreditors addressed diversity as an independent standard, a standard devoted exclusively to diversity. A small number of accreditors did not address diversity at all. *Dimensions of Diversity*, defined as descriptors, were identified in the standards. The most often addressed dimensions were gender, disability, culture, race, age, nationality, ethnicity, religion, creed, and sexual orientation.

Extrapolating data, the FY 2006-2007 *ASPA Membership Roster* was used to report findings pertinent to the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors membership. Of the 51 members, 7 were not included in the analysis: 6 because they did not appear on the CHEA list and 1 set of standards was not available for review. One hundred and five sets of standards representing 44 accreditors were examined to determine if diversity was addressed; if so, in which (categories of) standards and under what construct: within standard(s) or as a stand-alone/independent standard. Terms used to relate concepts of diversity were also identified. Finally, forms of international recognition among accreditors were cited.

Standards were categorized accordingly: Institutional Environment/Sponsorship, Mission/Philosophy, Governance, Programmatic Assessment, Curriculum, Students, Faculty/Staff, Facilities, Finances, and Resources. Other categories as defined by the accreditor were also noted. The number of standards within sets varied. The majority, 4, of accreditors addressed diversity in one or two distinct standards in their documents. Fifteen accreditors did not address diversity at all. (See Chart 1.)

Within standards, diversity was primarily addressed in Curriculum, followed by Students, Governance, and Faculty. In Mission/Philosophy, Facilities, Programmatic Assessment, and Resources, diversity was less frequently addressed. Institutional Environment/Sponsorship and Finances had no presence of diversity across all sets of standards. (See Chart 2.)

Examples for each category follow.

Curriculum.

III. GENERAL CONTENT STANDARDS

D. Repertory and history includes but is not limited to familiarity with music from a variety of cultural sources, historical periods, and media.

National Association of Schools of Music Commission on Accreditation, 2005.

Students.

4.5 Student Diversity.

Stated application, admission, and degree-granting requirements and regulations shall be applied equitably to individual applicants and students regardless of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or national origin.

Council on Education for Public Health, 2005.

Governance.

Standard 3 - Administration. 3.6 The program must comply with applicable state and federal non-discrimination regulations.

American Optometric Association Accreditation Commission on Optometric Education, 2004.

Faculty.

4. FACULTY The qualifications, academic position and professional activities of faculty and instructional personnel shall promote and enhance the academic mission and objectives of the program.

Diversity and Balance. The faculty and instructional personnel represent a diversity of populations and academic viewpoints as well as a balance of professional interests and experience in teaching, service, research and practice.

Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board, 2002.

Mission/Philosophy.

SECTION II PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND CURRICULUM B. The program objectives 1. reflect current knowledge and positions from lay and professional groups concerning the counseling and human development needs of a pluralistic society; 2. reflect the present and projected needs of a pluralistic society for which specialized counseling and human development activities have been developed; G. Flexibility is provided within the program's curriculum to accommodate individual differences in student knowledge and competencies.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2001.

Facilities.

VI. Physical Resources and Facilities

VI.4 ...These facilities are appropriately staffed, convenient, accessible to the disabled, and available when needed, regardless of forms of locations of delivery of the school's program.

American Library Association, 1992.

Programmatic Assessment.

SECTION B.2: Program Evaluation. The program evaluation shall include B.2.5 recruitment and retention of students with an emphasis on diversity; ...

Council on Rehabilitation Education, 2003.

Resources.

Standard 5.0 Program Resources 5.5 The program has access to a client base sufficiently large and diverse to achieve the program's mission, goals, and objectives and to prepare students to meet the ASHA- recognized national standards for entry into professional practice.

The program should provide information about the size and diversity of the client base and describe the clinical populations available in the practicum facilities where students are placed.

Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2004.

Overwhelmingly, diversity was addressed throughout standards as indicated in Chart 1. However, 4 accreditors have standards totally focused on diversity – labeled as *stand-alone/independent*. An example is the standard from the National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE).

Diversity. The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. These experiences include working with diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P--12 schools.

NCATE, 2001.

Dimensions of diversity were defined as terms used by accreditors. Table 1 summarizes the frequencies among the sets of standards. Examples of other dimensions included nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, affirmative action, family spirituality, color, underrepresentation, disadvantaged, multiculturalism, underserved, ADA, lifestyle, minorities, test/performance anxiety, special needs, and equity.

International recognition was recorded as a relevant convention of diversity. In this study, it is regarded as an arrangement to affirm compliance with standards for programs existing outside the physical borders of the United States. Fifty-nine accreditors have such initiatives. Not all lead to formal accreditation and are termed, Assistance, Alternative Review, Substantial Equivalency, International Affiliates, and Recognition.

This investigation has revealed that the majority of ASPA accreditors incorporate diversity in standards through use of terminology that rationally reflect the concept. More importantly, expectations for institutions and programs explicate requirements and expectations which affirm programmatic commitments and practices.

Two areas for further study have evolved from this analysis. First, through case study methodology, an examination of histories of accreditors' approaches to diversity, studying factors and impetus for decisions about inclusion of diversity in standards would be worthwhile. Additionally, an analysis of how site teams determine compliance with standards with diversity presence could add insight into the interpretation of standards and offer implications for training teams who review programs. Essentially, are those unmet standards most often dealing with an aspect of diversity? And, how are those matters addressed by the accreditor?

Finally, a value of this study is noted. As standards are continuously revised, the findings of this study may be useful as a source for terminology appropriate for reflecting the accreditors' commitment to diversity as well as stylistic suggestions. The database will be maintained and updated on occasion with the inclusion of revised editions of standards. A more in-depth report of the entire study is in progress for publication.

Chart 1. The Frequency of Diversity in the Total Number of Standards

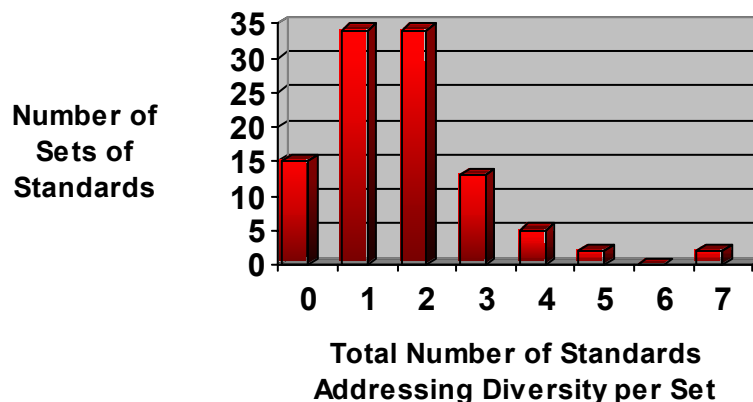


Chart 2. Diversity Presence in Standards

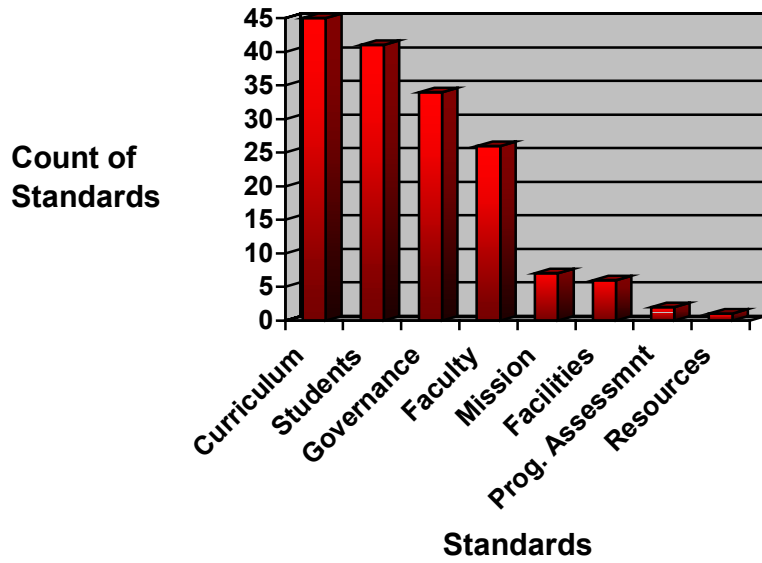


Table 1. Dimensions of Diversity Frequency

Gender	39
Culture	35
Disability	35
Race	32
Age	31
Nationality	25
Ethnicity	20
Religion	20
Creed	17
Sexual Orientation	16
Socioeconomic Status	13
Globalism	10
Language	8
Education	5
Marital Status	5
Values	3
Learning Style	2
Vocation	2
Geography	1
Veteran Status	1