

CHARTING ACCREDITATION'S FUTURE

What's Next in the ACPE Accreditation Standards Revision Process?

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INTRODUCTION

During the next several months, the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) will be revising its standards and guidelines for professional pharmacy education.¹ As a first step in this important process, ACPE sponsored an Invitational Conference *Advancing Quality in Pharmacy Education: Charting Accreditation's Future* held September 12-14, 2012 in Atlanta, GA.² ACPE's Board of Directors requested this conference because of the many changes in the health care system landscape and the need to ensure that pharmacy graduates are best prepared to provide patient care services in new health care models. This was the first time ACPE has used an invitational conference to initiate a standards revision process. This paper describes:

- How the recommendations received during the Invitational Conference will inform the ACPE standards revision process
- What other efforts ACPE will make to gather additional meaningful input from various stakeholder groups on the adequacy of the present standards and opportunities for their improvement
- How drafts of the proposed revised standards will be prepared by ACPE and then be vetted through the relevant stakeholder groups
- The estimated timeline for when the revised standards might be approved by ACPE and when they must be implemented by programs.

BACKGROUND

ACPE is recognized by the US Department of Education (USDE) for the accreditation and preaccreditation, within the United States, of professional degree programs in pharmacy leading to the degree of doctor of pharmacy, including those programs offered via distance education. As such, ACPE must meet the USDE recognition criteria.³ One of the criteria that must be met relates to the review of an accrediting agency's standards:

§602.21 Review of standards:

- (a) The agency must maintain a systematic program of review that demonstrates that its standards are adequate to evaluate the quality of the education or training provided by the institutions and programs it accredits and relevant to the educational or training needs of students.
- (b) The agency determines the specific procedures it follows in evaluating its standards, but the agency must ensure that its program of review –
 - 1) Is comprehensive;
 - 2) Occurs at regular, yet reasonable, intervals or on an ongoing basis;
 - 3) Examines each of the agency's standards and the standards as a whole; and
 - 4) Involves all of the agency's relevant constituencies in the review and affords them a meaningful opportunity to provide input into the review.

Traditionally, "regular intervals" for ACPE's standards revision process has been every 6 to 8 years, which has been accepted as a reasonable time frame by the USDE. Given this interval timetable, ACPE has initiated the revision process for Standards 2007 by sponsoring the invitational conference described above.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONFERENCE

As noted in other papers in this series, a total of 44 recommendations were provided by the conference work groups (24 related to competencies needed by pharmacy graduates of the future and 20 related to how to better assess the attainment of these competencies by new graduates). Non-ACPE affiliated meeting participants graded each recommendation based on relative impact and feasibility and then, post meeting on a strongly agree/ agree/ disagree/strongly disagree scale, where written comments could be provided on each recommendation.

Prior to the January 2013 Board meeting, ACPE Board members and staff who attended the Conference also graded each recommendation based on its relative

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impact and feasibility. Results of this survey were combined with the other outcomes of the Conference and were used by the Board, with the guidance of Conference consultant William Zellmer, to make a series of important decisions. During the January meeting, the Board prioritized the recommendations received, assessed whether they were addressed to some degree in the present standards, and identified recommendations that should be considered in the drafting of the proposed revision to the standards.

ADDITIONAL INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDERS

In addition to its own deliberations, the Board will seek additional input from stakeholder organizations. Consistent with procedures used by ACPE in previous revisions of the accreditation standards, the current standards will be distributed in Spring 2013 to all major pharmacy organizations requesting organizational feedback on suggested changes. Feedback will also be requested from accrediting agencies for other health professions and from public organizations interested in health care issues. The requests will focus on both conceptual as well as content-driven feedback. Comments from each organization will be compiled and similar and opposing comments across organizations will be addressed.

PREPARING AND VETTING THE REVISED STANDARDS

The revision team composed of Board members and staff will study the prioritized recommendations from the Invitational Conference and the additional input from the stakeholder organizations and prepare a draft revision of the standards for Board approval by the January 2014 Board meeting. The draft revision will then be sent to the stakeholder organizations for written comment. In addition, Town Hall meetings on the draft revised standards will be held in Spring-Summer 2014 at the American Pharmacists Association annual meeting, the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy annual meeting, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists summer meeting, and the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy annual meeting. Feedback will be compiled and presented to the ACPE Board at their June 2014 and January 2015 meetings. Depending on the degree of suggested improvements, either the revised standards could be approved at the January 2015 meeting, or the need for further revisions

or additional stakeholder feedback could result in another round of requested feedback from the pharmacy stakeholder organizations leading to final approval at subsequent Board meetings.

When the standards revision is finalized, the Board will evaluate the degree of change that colleges and schools of pharmacy will need to institute the new changes and what would be a reasonable time to expect for their implementation. The Board undoubtedly would have received input along the way on the time needed for implementation from colleges and schools of pharmacy. By example, the current version of the standards was originally approved by the ACPE Board in January 2006 and because of the number and extensive nature of changes needed, they became effective July 1, 2007 (a.k.a. "Standards 2007"). By contrast, when ACPE released a revision of the guidelines to the standards in January 2011, because the changes were much less onerous, the Board set the effective date as February 2011.

SUMMARY

Revising the accreditation standards for pharmacy education involves a careful and deliberate process to assure that the best thinking of the pharmacy is captured. Methods used previously by ACPE in the standards revision process will again be utilized. Of note, the collective wisdom of the 101 participants of the ACPE Invitational Conference *Advancing Quality in Pharmacy Education: Charting Accreditation's Future* will provide a new method of capturing feedback on the revision process. The ACPE Board of Directors believes that the revised standards revision process will help ensure that pharmacy graduates of the future are optimally prepared for entering their roles in the health care system.

REFERENCES

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