

Proposal for Panel Discussion on  
Criteria for ABET/EAC Surveying Engineering Programs at  
The XXI North American Surveying & Mapping Educators Conference  
July 11-14, 2007 at Ferris State University  
Big Rapids, Michigan

Earl F. Burkholder, PS, PE  
NMSU Surveying Engineering Program  
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003

As shown on the attached list, there are 27 surveying/geomatics programs in the United States that are accredited by one of three commissions within ABET. The categories include 2-year associate degree technology programs, 4-year technology programs, 4-year applied science programs, and 4-year surveying engineering programs. I believe ABET is to be commended for accommodating the diversity of various surveying programs within the existing accreditation structure. On the other hand, one could argue that the voice or the impact of surveying is diluted by the same, let's say, fragmentation. Although not the focus of this proposal, that point could become significant.

There is a long history of why and how we came to be where we are today with regard to ABET accreditation. Rather than debate the merits of those details, I believe we (surveying educators and leaders of the profession) should be aware of our history (warts and all) as we assess where we are in light of the digital revolution and with respect to the services we provide society. And, given we understand where we've come from and where we are, I believe we should concentrate our discussion on a vision of where we want to be (or should be) in the future. I believe that we have the talent, the opportunity, and the resources to provide competent leadership to a burgeoning spatial data user community. The question is, do we aspire or have the resolve to do that?

Assuming we agree to develop a vision for surveying/geomatics, I believe a discussion of the accreditation criteria needs careful examination. The issues are much larger than I or maybe even the assembled group of educators can cover in a limited forum (although we certainly can and should get started on a discussion of the larger issues). Therefore, I am proposing that we begin with a consideration of surveying criteria within the various ABET commissions. Given that too involves a number of tough issues and that we can't expect to handle them all at this time, I am proposing a specific panel discussion of the ABET criteria for EAC Surveying Engineering (or similarly named) programs. See the attached list of email correspondence for background.

Tentatively, I would suggest the following persons be asked (some have already agreed) to participate on the panel:

Moderator: Mr. James Plasker, ACSM Representative on ABET Board of Directors

Mr. Curt Sumner, Executive Director ACSM  
Ms. Kelly Olin, Chair ACSM CARE Committee  
Dr. David Gibson, most involved in formulating existing criteria  
Dr. Steve Frank, ACSM Delegate to FIG Commission 2 – Professional Education  
Mr. Mike Falk, Chair ASCE Geomatics Division  
----- Representative from a Geomatics Engineering Program in Canada