

Education Committee report: September 2022

National Association of University Forest Resource Programs (NAUFRP)

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1. SAF Education Policy Review Committee

The Education Policy Review Committee of SAF has a number of items under consideration which are of interest to NAUFRP membership.

Student Demographic Data: This was debated during the revising of the accreditation standards over the last two years. The biggest challenge was that there was no information about how these data were being used (if at all) given the time taken to assemble and summarize what was being asked for. The SAF Chief Executive Officer, Terry Baker, and Associate Director: Accreditation, Dr. Jocelyn Harris, will be sharing an update about this later in the executive committee meeting.

Additional topics under consideration are:

- Accreditation of certificate programs
- Accreditation of CTE programs
- Developing separate standards for graduate degrees
- Opportunities to add additional specializations for accreditation
- Training and use of accreditation consultants

Accreditation of certificate programs: The majority of the discussion focused on the accreditation of certification programs. An example would be the forestry certificate program offered at [Front Range Community College](#) (which already hosts an accredited two-year program). The goals of working towards accreditation of certificate programs include 1. Meeting the needs of employers in the forestry sector, and 2. Broadening and diversifying participation in the forestry profession. A range of comments, concerns, and suggestions were raised, and some of these are summarized here. Note that these are based on the notes of the education committee chair and not the minutes of the meeting. Please direct any feedback about these issues to the education committee chair.

- Does this have the potential to take away from 2- and 4-year accredited programs in terms of enrollment and reputation?
- Will accrediting certificate programs cause confusion among employees in terms of the expectations of graduates of these programs?
- Certification of these programs broadens the reach of SAF accreditation, and perhaps will offer additional opportunities to grow the membership of NAUFRP.
- Should a term other than accreditation be used for these programs? Perhaps 'Certified by SAF' or some other similar terminology.
- Could a certificate program be housed in an institution that does not have an accredited 2- or 4-year program? How would standards such as the faculty standard be evaluated?
- If housed in an institution without a 2- or 4-year program, would a certificate program need to have an accredited sponsor or supervising program to help ensure that various accreditation standards are met?

- Logistical issues including the workload of the SAF Committee on Accreditation, program review procedures and visits etc.

Accreditation of CTE programs: Committee discussions did not consider CTE programs in detail as the group needs more information about what these programs look like as they are currently delivered.

Developing separate standards for graduate degrees: For graduate degrees, the committee consensus was that adding some clarifying wording to the existing standards for 4-year programs to articulate how these relate to accreditation of graduate programs would be useful and that a new set of standards for graduate degree programs is not necessary. Students pursuing research-based graduate programs develop a range of skillsets that align closely with their area of research, and accreditation standards for research-based degree programs would not be appropriate.

Opportunities to add additional specializations for accreditation: Opportunities to accredit different areas of specialization (to add to the urban forestry standard) were briefly discussed. Please share any thoughts on this with the education committee chair so that these can be brought forward to the Education Policy Review Committee.

Training and use of accreditation consultants: The training and use of accreditation consultants was discussed as a way of providing a trained resource for programs seeking accreditation. There would not be endorsement of these consultants beyond them indicating that they have completed an SAF training. Use of a consultant would be optional for programs, and is considered likely that some programs already use consultants to help them prepare their accreditation self-study and prepare for the site visit.

2. Fall 2022 enrollment survey

As previously discussed, the education committee plans to send a short survey to find out about early indications of enrollment numbers in Forestry and Forest Resource programs. This provides membership with an early indication of trends within NAUFRP, and will be shared with participating programs. Many program leaders are asked questions in the Fall about their enrollments relative to trends at other institutions, and this informal survey is aimed to assist with responding to these questions. Proposed survey content has been developed and the survey will be administered in the next three weeks as programs pass their enrollment census dates.

1. Name of institution
2. Contact person and email address
3. NAUFRP region

The balance of the survey questions will depend on feedback from the executive committee relating to whether to request information on % change, or raw data.

The trends in these data may be shared very generally, including in the NAUFRP newsletter, but this is not considered a scientific study. This survey does not replace the ongoing analysis of FAEIS data. There is a presentation about this data (up to 2021) being shared by Dr Tara Bal, Dr Terry Sharik et al. at the upcoming SAF national convention. This presentation has been shared with the NAUFRP membership list previously.