

ABET Resources Task Force

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CACHE recently completed a visioning process to chart the directions it should take for future activities. Input from department chairs obtained as part of this process indicated that support for ABET accreditation activities was an area where CACHE could provide benefits to its academic affiliates. Accordingly, CACHE formed a task force with a charge to develop resources that support department accreditation activities.

The first activity of this task force was to develop a more detailed picture of what departments need, and to gather information about best practices. We conducted another survey, polling 90 departments and obtaining a 15% response rate.

The general themes among the respondents related to data collection and data coherence. Departments indicated they could use assistance in gathering information from external constituents, collecting assessment artifacts, and keeping records organized.

As to best practices, departments largely reported methods that are familiar and unsurprising, but which nevertheless are probably not in widespread use, at least in the aggregate. This includes the use of web-based tools for advising students and tracking their progress; obtaining constituent input via email and phone surveys, advisory boards that meet with students as well as department personnel, and the use of focus groups. Faculty involvement is promoted through annual assessment meetings, continual attention to assessment at regular faculty meetings, and use of rubrics to simplify reporting tasks.

The task force aims to act on some of this information as we move forward. Our particular focus will be on the development of tools to aid data collection and analysis. We also hope to consolidate information about best practices, but until we obtain input from a broader range of departments we might tentatively refer to these as “better practices.”