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PANEL

IS AND IT PROGRAM ACCREDITATION: WHO, WHAT, WHY, AND HOW

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Abstract

The Computing Accreditation Commission (CAC) of ABET is committed to providing world leadership in assuring quality and innovation in computing education. To carry out this vision, the CAC has proposed changes in the structure of the criteria used to accredit computing programs – computer science, information systems and information technology. The new structure consolidates general criteria that apply to all computing programs, and cites program-specific criteria that apply to CS, IS or IT programs. This is an important reorganization that allows an emerging computing discipline program (e.g., bio-informatics) to apply for accreditation under the general criteria until the discipline matures to a point where a model curriculum can be developed. This new format also begins to move CAC documents to outcome-based statements leaving the implementation to the individual programs. This session discusses the who, what, why, and how of IS and IT accreditation. ABET and AACSB accreditation are compared, the CAC/ABET accreditation process is reviewed, and proposed revisions to the IS and IT programs accreditation criteria are highlighted.

Keywords: Accreditation, ABET, Computing Accreditation Commission, information systems, information technology

Session Goals

The overall goal of this panel is to explain the role of accreditation in building quality programs in computing. The session includes discussion of the relationship of ABET and AACSB accreditation, an overview of the IS accreditation criteria, the pros and cons of accrediting IS and IT programs, and the accreditation process for IS and IT programs.

Who

The Computing Accreditation Commission (CAC) of ABET currently accredits undergraduate programs in computer science, information systems, and information technology. Programs that are housed in a college or school of business may also be accredited by AACSB.

What

Proposed changes in the structure of the ABET/CAC criteria for accreditation would result in general criteria that apply to all computing programs and program-specific criteria that apply to computer science, information systems or information technology programs. This new structure supports innovation by allowing emerging computing disciplines (e.g. bio-informatics) to apply for accreditation under the general criteria until the discipline matures to where model curricula are advanced. It is important that members of SAIS be aware of these developments and have the opportunity to provide input during the review and comment period. Therefore, further objectives of this session are to inform, to discuss, and to obtain feedback regarding the new criteria structure, including the proposed general and program-specific criteria, and the timetable for implementing these changes.

Why

The process of gaining accreditation requires a significant commitment of time, energy, and resources. Reasons why an institution might want to undertake the effort to gain CAC/ABET accreditation will be discussed.

How

The steps involved in the accreditation timeline will be detailed. Accreditation is a multi-year effort. The timeline for providing public feedback on the revised CAC/ABET accreditation criteria will also be reviewed.

Substantial time will be allowed for discussion regarding any aspect of computing program accreditation.

Outline of Session

The session will be organized as follows:

1. Background of ABET
2. Players in computing accreditation
3. The relationship between ABET and AACSB accreditation
4. Comparison of Current and Revised CAC/ABET Criteria
5. IS Program Criteria: What is an “information systems environment”?
6. Why seek CAC/ABET accreditation?
7. The CAC/ABET Accreditation Process

Intended Audience

The intended audience for this session includes faculty from AACSB or ABET accredited information systems programs, faculty from IS and IT programs that are not currently accredited but are interested in accreditation, faculty from emerging computing discipline programs who are interested in accreditation, and faculty from all computing programs who are interested in building quality programs.