

A BIMONTHLY
PUBLICATION FOR
NCEES MEMBER BOARDS

From the Director

I'm happy to report that the Center has added two new credential evaluators to its staff, bringing our number of full-time evaluators to six. Our new additions bring valuable skills and experience as the Center continues to grow to meet the needs of the NCEES Member Boards.

Gaby Espiridon will evaluate education credentials originating in Middle Eastern countries and India. He is originally from Lebanon and speaks Arabic, French, and Spanish. Elfa Shabashvili will evaluate the credentials of applicants who have studied in Russia and Eastern Europe. Elfa brings a wealth of knowledge about European education systems, thanks in part to the experience she gained at the state university in her native Kazan, Russia, managing the Tempus program—an EU initiative to facilitate university modernization and innovation between the EU and partner countries.

As more Member Boards begin to refer applicants to the Center, I'd like to remind readers that a Center credential evaluation is designed to advise Member Boards as they decide on an applicant's eligibility to sit for a

licensing exam. While an evaluation from the Center will provide board members (and applicants) with an excellent idea of what types of courses are needed to correct deficiency areas within ABET criteria, ultimate authority for admitting candidates rests with the state boards. Because of this, the Center is not able to make specific course recommendations on behalf of Member Boards. Also, the Center was created to assist Member Boards with evaluations of foreign degrees—the volume of incoming applications prevents us from being able to evaluate applications for candidates earning degrees from non-ABET accredited programs in the United States.

I encourage the MBAs to pass this newsletter along to their board members so that they can remain up-to-date with the Center's activities. I look forward to working with you during a busy and productive 2008.

Eva-Angela Adán
Center Director

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Fraud update

- In **Cameroon**, the University of Buea recently issued a memorandum from the university's registrar with a list of 113 persons discovered to have submitted forged documents from the university. The memorandum included a list of institutions that had submitted the names to the universities for verification. One colleague from a Swedish university said that of 82 degree certificates submitted to Buea for verification, 76 were said to be inauthentic.
- The tremendous disruption within the war-torn nation of **Liberia** has made it nearly impossible to verify documents from the University of Liberia. A colleague working for the American embassy in Ghana has advised that candidates from Liberia are best advised to "start from scratch in developing a portfolio of credible credentials."
- An ongoing degree fraud scandal in **South Korea** that has captured the attention of the public continues to shed light on higher education in a country where competition is fierce and prestigious degrees highly valued. According to published reports, Korean officials are cracking down on degree fraud as a result of highly publicized outings of a wide range of figures, including an art history professor at prestigious Dongguk University, a singer, military lieutenants, a Buddhist monk, and a belly dancer.

A closer look: tertiary-level institutions

Tertiary education (commonly known in the United States as post-high school or college-level education) represents studies beyond the standard high school education. Admission to a tertiary-level institution is based on a school-leaving certificate that represents completion of a comprehensive high school (upper-secondary) education, which can vary in duration from 10 to 13 years, depending on country and historical/political era.

Institutions providing tertiary-level education can go by any number of names: colleges, universities, institutes, and academies, to name a few. Sometimes, confusion results from the fact that in some countries these names refer to secondary-level institutions (such as Pakistani colleges and Latin American *colegios*). Therefore, careful examination of the mission and entry level requirements of an institution or program is critical to determine the level of education.

The first level of tertiary education, undergraduate studies, includes intermediate programs such as two-year general education studies (e.g., the German

vordiplom), three-year diplomas that cover basic-level education in a particular academic field (e.g., the Polish *dplom inzynier*) and higher vocational/technical education. In some countries, undergraduate studies include an additional two to three years of study that lead to professional academic degrees or titles such as the *Título de Ingeniero* for engineers in Spain.

By and large, a tertiary-level program in engineering should lead to a professional qualification/title that entitles the holder to legally practice the profession and register his or her credentials at a nationally recognized professional organization.

In some countries, training in the field of engineering may be obtained through professional organizations offering distance education programs outside the traditional tertiary structure. The credential earned may be recognized by industry and for employment purposes, but it differs in academic structure and mission from the traditional tertiary program offered by universities and comparable academic institutions.

In the next issue of *The Center Bulletin*:

- A closer look at the Center's international database of academic institutions, degree programs, and courses