



National Environmental Health Science & Protection Accreditation Council

*Enhancing the education and training of students
in environmental health science and protection*

EHAC Board Meeting Minutes – July 5, 2021 – 10:00am Pac. Time

Board Members Present: Jason Finley, Tania Busch Isaksen, David Gilkey, Tim Murphy, Dave Gilkey, Don Williams

Board Members Absent: Laura Suppes

Visitor: Kim Hall

EHAC Staff: Leslie Mitchell

1.0 Meeting Called to order at: 10:00am PST by Chair Finley.

2.0 Standing Items

2.1 Approval of Agenda: Gilkey moved to approve the July 5, 2021 agenda with a second from Murphy, followed by unanimous approval.

2.2 Approval of May 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes: Williams moved to approve the May 20, 2021 minutes. There was a second from Murphy and the minutes were approved unanimously.

3.0 Reports

3.1 Treasurer's Report: Murphy provided a brief overview of the budget documents, deferring to Saturday's Annual Meeting for a more in depth explanation, with no questions from the Board.

3.2 Chairperson's/ED Report: Finley/Mitchell

- **UG Requirements vs. Guidelines** – Finley raised the issue of whether the Undergraduate Requirements should be changed to “Guidelines” to match the Graduate Guidelines and to address perceived prescriptive nature of “requirements”. Bush Isaksen explained that originally both UG and Graduates documents were labeled “guidelines”, but Council made the change to Requirements during the last UG criteria review because the “guidelines” were being treated as requirements and many Council Members felt they should be titled as such. Busch Isaksen also explained the Graduate Guidelines Committee will be recommending a change in the Graduate “Guidelines” to Graduate “Requirements” in order to bring these criteria into alignment and provide more clarity regarding EHAC accreditation criteria.
- **EH – the Diverse Discipline** – Finley approached the Board with the idea of a branding discussion regarding EHAC and the EH field/academic discipline. Finley suggested the “Diverse Discipline” and requested the Board consider whether to bring a discussion of branding EHAC education to the Council. There was strong support for having this discussion, with Gilkey suggesting “Excellence in Environmental Education” as another

possible branding tag line. Board was in favor of bringing the topic to the Council for consideration.

- **Action: Mitchell will write an email to Council requesting that they think about potential tag lines to promote EHAC accreditation in the EH discipline and submit suggestions or bring them to the virtual annual meeting on Saturday and Sunday July 10 and 11.**
- **Preaccreditation** – proposal to remove accreditation option (Finley). At the May Board meeting, there was a great deal of discussion related to removing the “preaccreditation” option from the available accreditation actions.
 - **Motion: Busch Isaksen moved to bring a recommendation for removal of the preaccreditation option from Policy No. 5.4 to the Council for discussion and vote.**
 - **Second:** Murphy
 - **Discussion:** Board maintained their concerns outlined by Busch Isaksen about the category including the great expense to programs and great effort of “gaining” preaccreditation status as programs have to submit two self-studies and host two site visits when they are placed in this category. This is likely why there have only been a few programs given preaccreditation status and none who have followed through to gain full accreditation.
 - Bush Isaksen suggested that the Preaccreditation category could be revised to apply explicitly and only to programs that are developing degrees and applying for initial accreditation and not for reaccrediting programs. The Conditional option would apply to reaccrediting programs only.
 - Board intends for this motion to stimulate discussion around the Preaccreditation topic and to end up with clarifying language or completely drop the category.
 - Busch Isaksen confirmed that CEPH has a Preaccreditation category.
 - Busch Isaksen and Murphy agreed that it would be helpful to be more specific about describing how the intention behind the Preaccreditation option is to encourage and support programs interested in becoming accredited.
 - Gilkey called the question
 - **Vote:** motion was unanimously passed
 - **Action: Mitchell will add this motion to the agenda for further discussion by the Council and Mitchell will present the option at the Council Meeting on July 10.**
- EHAC Annual Mtg. agenda (Mitchell) - Mitchell reviewed the agenda.
 - EHAC Board succession discussion
 - **Murphy submitted his self-nomination for General Chair for 2021-2022 to Nominations Co-chair Williams at the suggestion of Busch Isaksen.**
- **Council on Public Health Linkages - comment on draft Public Health Competencies? Due July 30, 2021 (Mitchell) - TABLED until next Board mtg.**
- July 15 AEC Lunch Time session (Gilkey/Mitchell) – invited back for second EH workforce discussion.
- **NEPHIP - update (Mitchell) – tabled until next Board meeting.**

3.3 AEHAP Update (Kim Hall)

- AEHAP Annual Meeting is on July 14 from 11-2pm EST and Hall invited the Board to join the meeting. The meeting will focus on the consistent theme that PDs report of challenges around student recruitment and retention. AEHAP will host a roundtable discussion of

these topics. Following the meeting, the Board will form two committees to address the former and to develop a Social Marketing campaign among current and future SEHA chapters. Currently there are 3 SEHA chapters at ECU, Western Carolina and Univ. of Washington. Univ. of Findlay will be submitting their final paperwork in the fall.

- JEH article was just submitted entitled “Emerging from COVID 19” and focuses on how AEHAP has been building momentum over the last few years and discusses tangible action plans for moving forward toward stronger programs and more students.
- AEHAP Board elections had over 60% of program participating the election!

3.4 Undergraduate Program Report – tabled until June meeting

- **BYU update – tabled until next meeting.**
- **New Program Director at Missouri Southern –**
 - Teresa Boman - Gilkey recommended approval of Dr. Boman which led to discussion in which Board members expressed concern that while Boman has a great deal of lab related experience, she may lack significant EH field experience. The situation is comparable most recently, to the PD at TSU, who was asked to gain some EH field experience. Busch Isaksen expressed a desire to maintain consistency with recent decisions in which PDs were asked to gain EH field experience. Finley strongly cited Boman’s apparent years of practical experience, but academics on the Board felt that Boman’s CV and letter shows a career conducting lab related testing rather than gathering information from the field and specifically EH related information.
 - **Action: Gilkey will call Boman to ask her if she indeed does have more relevant EH field experience and, if she does not, he will suggest that she take some time to shadow an EH field practitioner (similar to the experience recommended to and later lauded by PD at Texas Southern University). Gilkey will communicate the outcome of his conversation with Boman to Mitchell who will write an appropriate letter for the situation, if necessary. Board will revisit the topic once Gilkey has spoken with Boman.**
- **Possible accreditation from The Ohio State Univ. (Mitchell) – tabled until next meeting.**

3.5 Graduate Program Report – Vice Chair Busch Isaksen

- No report

3.6 Committee Reports

- Policy/Best Practices Committees (Busch Isaksen) – update
 - Busch Isaksen explained that in the effort to develop a virtual site visit policy, the committee discovered that EHAC policy does not outline the actual site visit process. A short explanation exists in the Requirements and Guidelines but not in the policy. Further effort was deemed wasteful in the light that there has been much discussion regarding the need to eliminate redundancy among the EHAC Policy document, the UG Requirements and the Graduate Guidelines. Towards that end, Mitchell revised the EHAC policy to include Site Visit and Self-study review processes, removed the policy language from the UG Requirements and updated the flow of the document. Busch Isaksen suggested presenting the updated EHAC Policy Table of Contents to the Council in preparation for a post Annual Meeting vote on the Policy document as a whole.

- **ACTION: Busch Isaksen will prepare slides for the Annual Meeting showing the revised Table of Contents and will give an overview of the evolution of the changes and what Council can expect to vote upon in the near future.**
- Virtual Site Visit option discussion: Busch Isaksen explained that after thinking over the idea a bit more, she and Mitchell decided that creating a virtual site visit policy would not be a good idea. She feels that such policy would devalue EHAC's accreditation process. Further, Busch Isaksen submitted that on site and in person visits are necessary to thoroughly assess programs rather than to rely only on paper and what might be virtually presented. Gilkey emphasized that there will likely be a lot of push back from Program Directors and administrators since the virtual site visits have been so successful the last two have and have been, at least in part, well received by program directors. Busch Isaksen and Murphy agreed that virtual visits can be useful and much less costly when necessary, however the quality and "in person feel" of the visit is greatly diminished. Finley added that an applied discipline should have an applied (in person) visit. Busch Isaksen also cited that CEPH was required by the Department of Education to conduct follow up site visits for those reaccreditations that were completed virtually due to COVID 19. Busch Isaksen submitted that there is a clause in the current proposed site visit policy allowing for virtual visits in extraordinary circumstance (e.g. a pandemic).
- Virtual Program Director representation for reaccrediting programs. Busch Isaksen explained that the site visit policy will include the option for PDs to represent their reaccreditation programs remotely, only if their programs have no complications. This option can be seen as a cost savings option for qualifying degree programs, somewhat softening the cost of an onsite site visit, which will continue to be required of all programs.
- **ACTION: Busch Isaksen will prepare slides for the Annual Meeting relaying this information and again prepping the Council for a future vote on the entire revised Policy and Requirements documents. Council will be given 2 weeks to review and vote for the new documents online.**
- Graduate Guidelines Committee update (Busch Isaksen) – postponed to Annual Mtg.

4.0 Old Business:

- **ABIH/BGC (Finley/Mitchell)** – BGC provided a revised MOU and also a Body of Knowledge related to their CIP exam. Finley enquired if the Board was interested in continuing to pursue a partnership with BGC. There was interest and the consensus was to provide BGC's request in a concise package for the Council to consider. Pros related to the partnership included Finley's submission that the credential from BGC is another way to reinforce EH learning and education via an unbiased test. Murphy pointed out that it would open up opportunities for students to pursue different areas of EH. Gilkey added that there is a trend toward credential creep – gaining as many credentials as you can – including things like a digital badge, cited in the MOU. Concerns included questioning the necessity of an MOU – as we do not have one with NEHA, is the credential worthwhile and does it compete with the REHS (e.g. why would one get both and REHS and a CIP, etc.?). Murphy was also concerned about using the BGC exam as an exit exam because it is not the academician's role to teach to a test (e.g. REHS arguments of the past). Murphy

explained that NEHAS REHS/RS exam is measuring how you do an inspection and students don't do inspections until after they graduate. Murphy liked the idea of an exit exam, but it has to be the right exam and PDs need to be able to see the questions on the exam. Gilkey was in favor of using it as an exit exam but would want to see the questions as well. Gilkey also was concerned with the amount of effort being asked of PDs for this project.

- **ACTION: Mitchell suggested presenting the BGC credential option to the Council and taking a "strawman" vote on whether to pursue the partnership any further. If Council is interested in moving forward, there needs to be a discussion of how to deal with this and other requests of this nature (e.g. should we have an MOU with NEHA regarding our handshake agreement that EHAC graduates can sit early for the REHS/RS exam?), and answer the question of whether the MOU should be with EHAC or with individual degree programs.**

5.0 New Business

6.0 Next Board Meeting: Annual Meeting July 10-11

7.0 Adjournment Mtg. adjourned at 11:50am Pacific.