

Takeaways from the Education Summit

The Oregon Board of Psychologist Examiners held an education summit on November 23, 2013. The Board appreciates the time and effort from all of the participants at the meeting and felt the content presented was critical to understanding the dynamics of creating an APA accreditation mandate for Psychologists.

Below are highlights from the education summit discussions:

1. While APA accreditation is not perfect, it is the best there is to ensure that a graduate program in psychology has been thoroughly examined and it is the only formal standard for vetting a graduate psychology program.
2. Regional accreditation examines the whole school, and does not look at the quality of individual programs in that school. It gives us no information about the quality of a psychology department.
3. While APA accreditation gives us a certain level of confidence in a graduate's competency, graduation from a school that lacks APA accreditation does not mean that a student (or his/her school) is inferior.
4. APA accreditation is a long and slow process that takes years, and can put students at a disadvantage in Oregon if they start at a school that is in the process of getting APA accreditation, then graduate before their school has enough time to complete it.
5. Graduate programs in psychology cannot get APA accreditation until they have actually graduated students from that program. This means that some students function as "guinea pigs" that help a school attain APA accreditation but don't get to benefit from it in Oregon.
6. APA may be out of step with modern trends in education: They take too long to accredit and have no process to accredit programs that are substantially distance learning.
7. There are concerns that APA accreditation would bias against online of PsyD programs. However, the data does not support that. In 2013, more than two thirds of Oregon's new licensees were from PsyD programs. Two of the three Oregon doctoral programs are PsyD and the programs are accredited and their students have historically had no issues getting licensed in our state. There is at least one APA accredited program that provides a substantial online component – Fielding Institute and several other accredited programs – Chicago School, several Argosy's have online facets.
8. There was a commonality in the pro/con argument to APA regarding the rigor and paperwork involved. Those concerned about APA accreditation talk about the length, time and paperwork as impediments for some programs to go through the process. Those in favor use the same argument as reasons for wanting a rigorous vetting of their programs.
9. Any plans to go forward should consider a mechanism to accommodate schools and students that are "in process" of obtaining APA accreditation.