NACC Meeting Recap, Needs and Next Steps

Overview: At the 2015 ARNOVA annual meeting NACC members held a business meeting and gave a panel presentation. The second part of the document contains a retyping of Hale's original notes from these meetings. Apologies to all whose names I didn't get correct. The first part of the document attempts to consolidate these notes into specific questions and actions steps. The focus of both parts is not on "whether" we need to accredit, but on practical questions and steps that we "need" to consider as we move towards accreditation.

Item #1: Don't you forget about me

A number of comments centered on the "need" to be inclusive of many different things. These include;
- International Programs
- Social Impact, Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise
- Alternative and critical perspectives
- Undergraduate programs
- Service learning
- Programs that have research centers but don't have for-credit classes
- Non-credit programs certificate programs

Action Item: We need to clearly articulate some "fence" around which we will be accrediting. Part of this we have already done, but we need a statement of some sort outlining all of the types of programs we want to accredit.

Item #2: Theory Matters

In general the participants seemed to love the idea that we would ground our accreditation in Nonprofit/Philanthropy theory as it continues to develop. This was mentioned in terms of field building and separating NACC accreditation from others. *Action Item: Keep "theory" central to the development of the NACC accreditation.*

Item #3: Practice matters

While the theory first perspective seemed more dominant, many participants asked to make sure that the accreditation process recognized the value that "pracademics" and straight practioners bring to the nonprofit teaching process. *Action Item: Identify and include ways of "counting' the role practioners play in any accrediting process.*

Item #4: I love this but….

The primary concern mentioned at the meetings was the way that the NACC accreditation would overlap with existing accreditations. The primary point of conflict was with NASPPA but AACB and Social Work programs voiced similar concerns. Many of these comments were phrased in the idea of "my Dean" doesn't want to have to "do/pay" for another accreditation. These concerns were also phrased in a sense that existing accreditation groups are unlikely to

"roll over" for a new accrediting body. *Discussion/Action Item: Ultimately forming partnerships with existing accrediting bodies seems like the way forward. However, given our timetable and resources would it perhaps make sense to move forward on accrediting stand-alone nonprofit/philanthropy programs first and add on partnerships later on once we solidify the stand-alone nonprofit/philanthropy space?*

Item #4: NACC membership and accreditation

A number of participants wanted to know how membership in NACC and accreditation would work. Do you have to be accredited to be a member of NACC? *Action Item: While an important issue it does not seem like a make or break issue that needs resolution immediately. I would suggest that for now we look at membership and accreditation as separate for now and focus on developing the accreditation processes first.*

Item #5: NACC accreditation and US News Rankings

This came up more than I anticipated but the linkages between these two issues were quite important to a number of participants. *Action Item: As with the previous issue this seems like something to table until after we develop the accreditation processes. Rankings are important and we certainly make the case to US news at some point in the future. But this seems a secondary issue for now.*

Item #6: Relationship between FERPA, CHEA and other Department of Education programs.

Not many people brought this up but even so it seems like and important set of research questions for us to answer. *Action Item: Form a subcommittee to find answers to these types of questions, What sort of power do these organizations have to kill or determine what NACC does? Do they have processes we would eventually need to follow? What do we need to know about them? Do we care about them? Should we?*

Item #7: Renee's Form

The key lesson is visuals matter and Renee's starting place form certainly got a lot of attention. She is in the process of editing and adjusting it. A few comments about it are contained below. *Action Item: Let Renee continue to work more magic, help her as needed*

Item #8:   A business model?

Is this a money maker for NACC? Is this a service that NACC members do? What sort of resources are needed and what sort of pricing structure will allow us to accomplish a meaningful accreditation? This a both an internal and external question that NACC needs to answer. *Action Item: Create a subcommittee to develop a functioning business model for NACC.*

Hale's Rough Notes

International and Foreign Programs and NACC accreditation

We need to think of strategies for including international folks in our meetings and discussions. For example; giving scholarships and travel funds to come to accreditation summit and other meetings. (Sal)

Social Impact, Social Entrepreneurship, Social Enterprise

These are fast growing and importantly untouched sectors for accreditation. NACC needs to make this a priority. (Marco)

This is the third point of differentiation between our accreditation and what else currently exists. (Rooney)

Alternative and Critical Perspectives

Any "inclusion" of standards and guidelines means by definition someone or something has the potential to be excluded. What sort of processes would NACC develop to ensure that we don't ignore these alternative perspectives and processes? We must embrace and not run from the diversity of the field. (Maureen, Portland State)

Undergraduate programs need to be included

There was a request and support for including undergraduate programs (Richard Clerkin). Partnering with the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance would be helpful particularly with undergraduates (Jennifer Rinello)

Mission and Theory needed

An important theme appeared in a number of different places (Maureen, Stuart at least) that we could not forget or ignore the stated mission of the different places and that we ought to at least attempt to factor in what the individual mission might be. In addition, the concept or theory of Nonprofit/Philanthropy First must continue to be developed and serve as a guiding framework for our efforts.

Service Learning Needed

Please don't forget that there needs to be some real solid recognition of the importance of service learning in our field (Alicia Spier)

Competition from NASPAA and others

The existing accrediting organizations are not going to go gently into that good night. We know for example that NASPAA has already reached out to a program with a MNO program to ask them to be the first MNO program to go through NASPAA accreditation. (Kathleen and Renee)

Other groups will continue to dominate MPA, MBA, Social work and other major degree accreditations but we have a niche to focus on first with stand-alone nonprofit programs and then work to partner with existing organizations to accredit concentrations, specializations, etc. (Patrick, David Gregory)

The linkages to business school accrediting bodies are really important to those in business schools. (Marco)

Practical considerations for NACC and accreditation

NACC needs a solid business model and to make determination of whether and how accreditation is a money making operation or a service to the profession. Obviously, the ideal would be to make NACC financially viable through accreditation but that may or may not be possible. (Patrick Rooney) NACC should be supplementary and complimentary to other accreditation programs.

Could we look at training programs as a revenue stream for NACC? (Rooney)

The central balance that we need to strike is that we don't want accreditation to be intrusive but at the same time it must have rigor and value.

A few people mentioned that perhaps there might be a way to structure the process in a tier or step process, starting with an endorsement, seal of approval and then an accreditation? (Mel Gray). Similarly it was pointed out that individuals get certified and organizations get accredited. (Patrick)

Need to accommodate both those with degree programs, certificates courses, etc., and those that are research ctrs.

The "team" of potential accreditors or site visitors should be made up of people who come from similar programs as the one they are accrediting. (Theresa) Not totally sure I agree on this but think that a process for this would be helpful.

We should move to calling our "theory" Philanthropy and Nonprofits first instead of the other way around (Rooney WHO ELSE?)

Accreditors should be of like programs (undergrad, grad etc.) and include a nonprofit program person (Teresa)

Accreditation and Ranking

A number of people spoke of the need to use this accreditation program as a way of getting US News and World Report to create a separate nonprofit section and that NACC would be "voters" in that competition. (Rooney, Ashcraft, Doug Irkle, Alicia Spier)

Do the rich get richer with existing rankings and accreditation? Yes many argued and we need our own nonprofit process. (Rooney)

What are in fact the characteristics that signify "best in class" and how would our ranking contribute to that calculation (Rooney)

Anxiety and maybe opposition certainly some questions

There was a not insignificant level of anxiety from several people about adding another accrediting process onto exiting ones. We heard from Deans and reps of Deans that they are not at all excited about the possibility of having to do one accrediting for NASPAA, one for AACSB and now one for NACC. We can address this by 1) ignoring it 2) partnering with these groups 3) making NACC accreditation comparatively easy. (UMKC, Portland State and Baruch College)

Partnering with NASPAA is a must do for some people. (John Casey)

A smaller number of people raised the fundamental question of whether accreditation of any kind is good for our industry. They felt it important to be able to clearly articulate the "why" we accreditation is needed. Is it worth the effort that it will take? (Doug Irhke)

How would programs that don't actually offer degrees fit in to accreditation? What about straight research centers or community service programs? They offer small sets of classes and do great work what can we do with them? (Jeff Griem and Gulnara from Moscow)

There was a small bit of discussion about the lack of real outcome measurement in the process as described. The argument was that without that outcome measurement the university accreditation hawks would be unlikely to fund this or support it. Maybe this is a reason to at least look at NLA partnerships. (Jennifer from Carthage)

There was a question about CHEA the accrediting body of accrediting bodies and whether or not NACC would be trying to get their approval. (David Birdsell) No idea.

NACC Membership and NACC Accreditation: What is the relationship?

Do you have to be an accredited NACC program to be a member of NACC? Does Accreditation get you NACC membership? There didn't seem to be a consensus but it is an issue to discuss and work through. (Portland State, Jennifer Rinello, John Casey)

Is there a possibility that some sort of association or partnership could happen between state nonprofit associations and NACC, that could be a new category (Jeanie from Hamline University)

Accreditation might be sufficient condition for NACC membership but won't be a necessary condition. (Rooney)

How determine sampling and representativeness of participants vs. overall students? (Rooney)

Others Reasons why Accreditation makes sense

Three people (Jeff Griem, Rob Fischer, Maureen Feit) argued that if nothing else accreditation would mean having some really smart people look at your program and then make recommendations for how to make it better. The new idea is that accreditation done "right" has the potential to actually provide valuable feedback to programs for improvement. This is both a positive but potentially a good negative "check" on what programs are doing. The goal here is to have an education component in the process.

This is excellent branding and name recognition for NACC and would add significant value to NACC membership. (Wendy Scaife)

The real value of an Accreditation process is that it is a "gift" for new schools starting a nonprofit programs. The guidelines are a start but giving new programs a roadmap would be such a good thing for those who want to start a program of any kind. (Sal Amiano)

There was a great deal of support for doing this in part because "it is time" we do not want nonprofits to be the step-child of anyone and this is an empowering move. (Marco, Ashcraft)

Instructor qualifications and questions

We need to make sure that we figure out how to adequately recognize the potential and possibility of adjunct and practioner faculty. How do we do that? One suggestion was that look to the business accrediting body and how they do it. (Bob Donnmeyer, Rooney, Angela)

Renee Irvin's Form additions and subtractions

Add something about aspirational programs to the mix (Theresa)
Add mission recognition at least (Maureen)
Add some measure of community input or service to it. (Hamline University person)
Ask about what gaps exist in the program so NACC might help fix. (Theresa and Rooney)
Eventually we might ask for self-reporting of student placement numbers or some other ultimate outcome measure (Theresa)
Add some job placement data (Rooney)
But if we include some aspect of student outreach do we run into FERPA questions?
Accreditors should be of like programs (undergrad, grad etc.) and
include a nonprofit program person
Also concerns about FERPA violations if ask for student names, numbers, emails.

Not discussed, but could invite students and alums to participate in either conference calls or skype interviews with external review teams—and not violate FERPA.

However, how secure confidentiality/privacy if conference calls?

How determine sampling and representativeness of participants vs. overall students?