Mortuary science programs: examination of the external evaluation team

D. Elaine Reinhard

University at Albany, State University of New York, d.reinhard@hvcc.edu

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MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAMS:
EXAMINATION OF THE EXTERNAL
EVALUATION TEAM

by

D. Elaine Reinhard

Dissertation
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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to expand the literature on mortuary science accreditation site visit teams. This study used a mixed methodology design to examine: 1) who serves on the American Board of Funeral Service Education accreditation external site visit teams; 2) reasons for involvement in accreditation; 3) perceptions of important site visit resources; and 4) team members’ perceptions of training. Three paper pencil instruments were used for data collection: 1) a modified form of the Participation Reasons Scale (Grotelueschen, 1985); 2) the Information Preference Scale (Bauer, 1986); and 3) a demographic data sheet. These data were supplemented by phone and electronic interviews. Subjects for the study consisted of all 39 external mortuary science evaluators who participated in accreditation site visits during the time period of 1999 to 2007. The total response rate was 100%.

The findings showed: 1) team members were mostly white males, 61-70 age range, coming from the Southeast and Central parts of the United States indicating there is not sufficient geographical diversity across team roles to ensure representation of the schools and funeral home stakeholders; 2) importance for involvement of the site team members overall is for collegial learning and interaction with some variance within roles; 3) perceptions of importance of resources for the site team visit varied with higher education educators preferring on-site documents and self-study report, mortuary science educators preferring on-site documents and practitioners preferring interviews with site personnel; and 4) training is limited and inconsistent for site team members.
Based on these findings, recommendations include: 1) more definitive recruitment and training for potential site team members as well as continuing education for current site team members; and 2) development of dissemination methods that encourage and reflect return of information to the team visitors’ own geographic area, and their home school program. Future research and practice should examine the role of different sources of information and how best to portray the data. Overall, more research is needed to further knowledge of mortuary science accreditation as very little exists in the field of accreditation and evaluation.
Chapter One

Introduction

Accreditation, as defined by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (2004), is a voluntary process by which a program allows trained external peer reviewers to evaluate its compliance with documented performance standards established by a non-governmental agency. As such, accreditation addresses an organization’s, rather than an individual practitioner’s, capability or performance; the major focus of accreditation is on continuous improvement and optimal achievement of all standards, not adherence to minimal standards (Patil, 2004). Accreditation has without question been the major external driver of institutional and program assessment for the past decade (Ewell, 2007).

Patterson (2001) points out the power of the accreditation process, noting that external evaluation has become institutionalized in the United States through accreditation associations. These external evaluations play an important formative role in encouraging institutions to develop and to make their own internal assessment of program goals and internal objectives that will guide their performance through the processes for ongoing self-studies (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007; Kinser, 2005).

Within the field of higher education training of professionals, accreditation is the primary form of quality review (Eaton, 2001). The process is carried out by faculty and administrative peers and consists of multiple phases that involve both internal and external evaluation. Accreditation begins with a program self-study that has as its goal an internal response to standards established by the accrediting agencies. This is followed by a comprehensive review of the program by external evaluators representing the accrediting
association whose goal is to value and verify the internal evaluation. As a result of accreditation, institutions of higher education are now required to document that future professionals are receiving the best possible education and training (Pearson, Vyas, Sensale, & Kim, 2001). The two processes serve diffuse purposes, evaluation and accreditation are integral components of each other; the role of regular program evaluation within accreditation serves to document and improve a programs performance and to expand the lines of communication for all stakeholders involved in the program before accreditation is granted (Ijzerman, Reuzel & Severens, 2003). On the other hand, objective based models of evaluation stress the need for standards and guidance similar to those provided by accreditation agencies if credible and usable information is to be obtained. This interrelationship is best evidenced by The Handbook for Evaluation Teams (2000) which stresses the importance of having standards for accreditation and having the accreditation process broken down into two interrelated phases of evaluation: the self-study and the external peer review. Ogawa and Collom (2000) broaden the role of evaluation and accreditation to encompass a stakeholder philosophy by emphasizing the importance of using accreditation standards to hold programs accountable not just to students but to all stakeholders. This accountability ensures students, future employers, and community consumers that graduates possess a core set of knowledge, skills, and abilities, and that there is consistency across and within programs of study (Harvey & Newton, 2004). Gilliam et al. (2002) noted that if stakeholders at all levels are part of the evaluation/accreditation process, the results will be viewed as more credible and can be used to assist policy makers in defending their programs against cut-backs, loss of funding,
and/or termination. In general, it is now believed that using a stakeholder-focused
approach to accreditation can facilitate the building of a better picture, (i.e. one where the
evaluation represents different consumer groups) of a program's status and its impact, and
as a result stakeholders’ input will foster practical use of the accreditation final report data
(Dunet & Reyes, 2006).

Although research has led to the inclusion of external stakeholders in general
program evaluation, their inclusion in the accreditation process is more limited. Although
passive input may be sought during the self-study phases through consumer surveys and
focus groups, it may be biased due to contextual involvement. It is only in the course of
the brief site visits that expert external stakeholders have an active role in the accreditation
process (Harvey & Newton, 2004).

Torres, Preskill, and Piontek (2004) report that inclusion of external evaluators play
a key role in building credible communication when examining influences and in reporting
program assessment outcomes to consumers and to potential students. This credibility is
built through the external evaluators’ on-site and post-visit activities which include interim
reports from different stakeholder groups, suggestions of evaluation plans, rewriting of
technical/final reports in stakeholder terms, and use of formal verbal presentations of
findings. As a result of these expectations, an external evaluators’ influence now extends
beyond the site team visit, and affects the very continuance of the program examined.

Bauer (1996) studied the role of external evaluators within the higher education
health science accreditation process and found a clear rationale for the involvement of
external stakeholders in the process. Most notably she found that the utilization of non-
program stakeholders as both information sources and as interpreters aided in the articulation of goals or standards link to practices throughout the institution.

Bauer’s study was limited, however, in that it only examined a few select areas of health science accreditation: Cytotechnology, Diagnostic Medical Sonography, Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic, Physician Assistant, Respiratory Therapy Technician, Surgical Technologist and Clinical Laboratory Technologist. Although these areas encompass a significant proportion of health science accreditation, the important area of Mortuary Science was not included.

Mortuary Science is frequently an overlooked area of health science education, but for obvious reasons it is a link in health progression, and it is important to consumers. Currently there are over 40,000 mortuary science practitioners in the United States, educated by 56 programs of mortuary science. Only one accreditation institution, the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), currently is responsible for ensuring the establishment and maintenance of standards of training and practice for these practitioners. In 2005, the U.S. Department of Education noted the importance of consistent measures of mortuary science accreditation and indicated a need for more stringent approach. The internal accreditation practice required by the ABFSE follows those of other health sciences and requires an external evaluation team. At this point in time, however, the number of consumers actively involved in the external accreditation process is exceedingly small and little formal knowledge is available to help solicit more involvement or to guide participation.
Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to expand upon accreditation literature in the health science area as initiated by Bauer (1996) by specifically focusing on mortuary science programs. This study addresses questions about who are the external evaluators that constitute mortuary science accreditation site visit teams, why they serve in this capacity, and their view of the importance of mortuary science accreditation information sources. For the purpose of this study, reasons for external evaluator participation in mortuary science program accreditations are operationally defined to reflect issues assessed by the Participation Reason Scale (PRS) developed by Grotelueschen (1985). Information used for mortuary science program accreditation decision-making will include five key areas available to the external evaluators: application information, self-study text, on-site documents, and interviews with on-site stakeholders and discussions with fellow site-team members.

Background of the Study

Professional Accreditation

Accreditation is a major component of the establishment, maintenance, and sustainability of professional programs in colleges and universities. This call for accountability is now coming from multiple external entities such as federal and state agencies, governing boards, students, parents and other stakeholders (Gratch-Lindaer, 2002). These groups are becoming increasingly persistent in their demands for evidence confirming that the quality of education obtained by students is as promised in the approved program. In reviewing this increased need for accreditation, Ewell (2001)
observed that the professional accrediting community must continue to encourage use of external assessors as part of the documentation process noting that student learning will be improved by utilizing the institutional self-study reports as well as help with external final reports. As a result, the professional accreditation community is making an intense effort to be responsive to these calls for accountability via external as well as internal sources (Lopez, 2002).

In her work in the health sciences, Bauer noted that there are some stakeholders that are required to be involved in accreditation: these include those directly associated with the educational program and the accreditation agency (Bauer, 1996). These stakeholder activities within the accreditation process are entrenched within a four-stage process. The first stage consists of an evaluation process in which internal program staff members conduct a self-study. According to Bauer (1996) the resulting document compares the program to minimum standards identified by the accreditation agency. The primary stakeholders at this stage are internal and represent the educational program; whereas external stakeholders are involved only as sources of information, not as gatherers or interpreters.

In stage two the self-study report produced by the educational program and institution in phase one, is distributed by the accreditation agency to an external evaluator team for review. At this point the external team reviews the report, and if needed can request additional information. During this phase, the internal stakeholders now become receivers of requests while the external evaluation team takes the role of data collector, interpreter and consumer.
Stage three constitutes the peer review process of accreditation or the external evaluation of the program. During a multi-day site visit the active external evaluators have the responsibility of validating the information provided by the educational program, in particular the self-study report, and supporting information. At this time, the site provides two additional sources of information for the external evaluators: on-site documents and additional stakeholder information obtained from interviews with program constituents. During this stage, it was noted that the external site visit team is the primary evaluator and that as representative stakeholders; they have an additional role of serving as a lens through which information is filtered. They are also responsible for ensuring the consumers and other stakeholders are heard (Bauer, 1996).

In stage four, using all the sources of information, the external evaluators generate a written report of their findings. Before leaving the program site, the team of external evaluators’ shares information that may be contained in the written report with site personnel, and once they are off site, they complete the report and submit it to the accreditation agency. Mortuary science accreditation follows this accreditation pattern; the major contributors are individuals associated with the program and those connected with the accreditation agency and a four phase process is used (ABFSE Accreditation Manual, 2007). This process is delineated in Figure 1 and each phase is discussed in depth in the next section.

**Phase 1: Internal Self-Study**

Mortuary science programs conduct an internal evaluation known as a self-study. During this phase, the mortuary science program under review will compare itself to minimum
standards that are identified by the accreditation agency which is the ABFSE. Local stakeholders are included in this process and can include but are not limited to funeral directors in the area, advisory board members, alumni of the program, and members of state funeral directing boards. When the self-study has reached completion, a report is produced by the internal evaluation team and is submitted to the accreditation agency with an application form. The individual mortuary science program, with its internal evaluation team, is the major participant in this phase. External stakeholders are sources of information that are utilized as part of the self-study report (ABFSE, 2007). Examples of these external stakeholders include: advisory board members, community funeral service practitioners and alumni. They are typically assessed via written and/or phone surveys each year for continuous accreditation purposes.

Figure 1. Mortuary science accreditation
Phase 2: Accreditation Agency

All program documents (college catalog and program brochure, self-study and application) that are requested by the accreditation agency will be distributed to a team of external evaluators who will perform a program site visit. The accreditation agency is the primary participant in this phase as it will appoint the three external evaluators and provide to each the information issued by the program. The three external evaluators consist of a higher education educator as team chair that has no history or connections in funeral service at all but instead has a background as an educational administrator. The higher education educator represents higher education standards and has the duty to head the team and pull together the final site team visit exit report. The second team member is a mortuary science educator that holds a position currently at one of the mortuary science educational programs. The third team member is a mortuary science practitioner who is currently working in the field as a funeral director at a funeral home. All members of the team are asked to voluntarily participate on a site visit as external evaluators without pay (ABFSE, 2007).

Phase 3: External Site Visit

The actions associated with the visit to the program by the external site team of evaluators constitute the peer review component of accreditation. This is an external evaluation of the mortuary science program. The external evaluation site team has the responsibility of validating the information provided by the education program, in particular the self-study document and all application information. The program review, during the time of the site visit, will supply two additional sources of information for the
external evaluation site team: on-site documents which back-up the self-study and stakeholder information obtained during interviews with program participants. During the site visit, the external evaluators are the primary participants and local stakeholders have a role as participants in supplying information as needed (ABFSE, 2007).

**Phase 4: Site-Visit Team Report**

This phase is product driven. From all information supplied, the external site visit team will produce a written report of their findings, as well as an oral report which will be presented in an exit interview with the administrative officials of the institution and program. During this presentation, the chairperson of the site team reviews the subsequent events that shall occur in the accreditation process, including the anticipated dates of the program’s receipt of the written site-visit report and the Committee on Accreditation meeting at which the program will be reviewed. The Chairperson then summarizes the committee’s findings and observations. At this time the program personnel can correct any immediately identified factual errors to the report. Within 30 days after the on-site visit following the exit interview the final report is then submitted to the accreditation agency as well as to program staff. The program is given 45 days to respond to any concerns that were expressed in the written site-visit report before the formal Committee on Accreditation meeting. At the annual meeting, representatives of the program (usually the Department Chair and/or Dean) appear before the Committee on Accreditation of ABFSE and address any concerns that were brought up by the site visit team in regards to the standards. Following the meeting with the committee, the program is informed by the committee whether they are fully accredited; whether they are reaccredited with
stipulations that the program must address before the next annual meeting; whether they are put on probation or whether they are going to lose their accreditation (ABFSE, 2007).

**External Evaluators**

As can be seen in the above process the external evaluators are prominent and important in the mortuary science accreditation process. As a result, the ABFSE Accreditation Manual (2007) specifically defines who can be external evaluators and what their roles are. In mortuary science site visit teams, the external evaluators operate as a single unit and have a common purpose. Their goal is to make objective assessments of the program based on the ABFSE established standards. External evaluators for the mortuary science site team visits are selected from a volunteer pool of individuals that are part of the ABFSE. According to ABFSE Accreditation Manual (2007), one of the evaluators must be a peer mortuary science program educator; a second team person must be a current mortuary science practitioner; and the third member of the team, a higher education educator who serves as team chair, must be an individual who has never had any professional connections to mortuary science education or practice as noted in Figure 2. Through rotation of personnel each program usually will have a different external evaluation team. Each member of the team is charged with specific standards to address and brings his or her own area of expertise, as defined by the ABFSE Accreditation Manual (2007) to the site visit such as:

- The peer educators bring with them a working knowledge of the roles and activities associated with the operation of a mortuary science program.
• The practitioners bring with them a working knowledge of the real world funeral service professional and their expectations

• The team chair brings a working knowledge of the accreditation standards developed by the accreditation agency.

The background and skill sets of the site team evaluators illustrate their experiences as college administrators, mortuary science program department heads and faculty, and/or as mortuary science professional practitioners. Each evaluator’s role must be interpreted within a frame of reference; that is, the role each one plays as part of the site team is dependent upon their life experiences and values (ABFSE Accreditation Manual, 2007).

**Stakeholder-Based External Evaluation in Accreditation**

As noted, stakeholders are key contributors to the accreditation process and support a stakeholder based philosophy of evaluation and accreditation. According to Langfeldt (2006) stakeholder evaluation draws on assumptions that those with an interest in the program evaluation will, if involved, be more likely to: 1) contribute to and learn from the evaluation, 2) ensure that it is done well and is credible to their representative group, and 3) be more willing to support decisions on the basis of the evaluation and to act on their results. External evaluators who participate in mortuary science accreditation represent different stakeholder groups involved in the program, and fall into categories that describe their relationship to a program rather than their relationship to the evaluation. The mortuary science practitioner represents those who have studied under a Mortuary Science program, will have graduated, and been credentialed by the association and must enforce the standards of practice, as part of their professional practice. The mortuary science
educator represents those who train the students and must enforce the standards of education as well as practice. The higher education educator as chair represents the interest of higher education and the overall premise of learning and educational standards.

Figure 2. Team member roles

O’Banion (1997) stresses the importance of involving multiple stakeholder groups in the process of accrediting a learning program and notes it is a very challenging task due to the number of stakeholders and the demographic diversity among them. Kaler (2003) indicates that it is necessary to consider all stakeholders and non-stakeholders in the process of accreditation because all has a stake in the final outcomes as well as when all are involved you encourage more employee, student and community commitment and support.
Consequently, employing external stakeholders as part of the evaluation process evaluation has multiple benefits as described above, but there is a possible risk. If there is not enough common ground for the team, they accidentally may gloss over the real differences or key defects in the program which means the evaluation process is ignored to a certain extent with no feedback from the stakeholders (Briggs, Stark, & Rowland-Poplawski, 2003). Consequently it is important to have well-trained, credible, concerned individuals as members of the external site visit team.

Baker’s (2004) research supports the concept of stakeholder-based evaluation if (1) it is practical, (2) if stakeholders voluntarily participate, and (3) if there are numerous opportunities for their participation. In the mortuary science field, representative stakeholders reflect these indices. That is, any stakeholders invited to participate in the interviews during the site visit should be interested not only in determining program quality and the institution’s effectiveness, but also in the ability of the program and the institution to assure consistent program quality and institutional effectiveness throughout the duration of a student’s course of study. The stakeholders are invited by the mortuary science program to voluntarily come to the program when the site team is visiting, to participate in exit reports and also interviews usually held during practical times during their work day, which for most is having lunch with the team.

Stakeholders who participate in evaluation and accreditation also benefit but according to ABFSE (2007) little evidence is provided of what these benefits may be. As a result, it becomes important to understand why individual stakeholders might choose to...
participate in mortuary science program accreditation. The need for accreditation is
growing in mortuary science and the number of supporting external evaluators is relevant.

**Accreditation Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework that will help us understand why individuals participate in
accreditation in the health sciences is provided by Bauer (1996) who grounded her work in
that of Houle and Grotelueschen. Houle (1961) provided a model that examined adult
learner orientation and motivations (namely, goal based, activity based, and learning based)
that were related to accreditation motivation. Houle (1961) further indicated that the
research of these individuals looked at traditional educational activities associated with
learning: namely, instruction-base, performance-base, and reinforcement base.

Subsequently, Houle’s research has led to the analysis of motivations and reasons as
to why individuals participated in professional accreditation and evaluation. The
Participation Reasons Scale (PRS) developed by Grotelueschen, Harnish, Kenny, and
Cervero (1980) applies to this analysis of the professional’s motivation. Grotelueschen
(1985), utilizing the PRS scale, identified five factors that specifically address the
prominent reasons any professional chooses to participate in evaluation and accreditation
namely: (1) professional development and improvement, (2) collegial learning and
interaction, (3) professional commitment, (4) professional service, and (5) professional
benefits and job security. Nichols (1991) supports the notion of the importance of these
motivational factors for academics to participate in educational activities, such as program
accreditation and assessment.
**Information Sources**

Additional research has shown that information sources are an integral part of program accreditation and evaluation (Wood, 2006). Wergin (2005) maintains that information sources must be accurate and up to date to give a current picture of a program's quality. Rovai (2003) emphasizes the importance of information and how it is utilized by academics. He found that how individuals used information related to assessment to make academic program change, especially in curriculum, were not necessarily results of the information collected but a result of the assessment design. Bauer (1996) stressed how significant the information sources are especially in relation to self-study and site visit documents.

As information use is examined by the external evaluator, it becomes evident from the research that to make good decisions related to the accreditation of programs, it is important that information provided be from relevant sources and be timely as well.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions will be addressed in this study and are depicted in Figure 3.

- Research Question 1: Who are the external evaluators that constitute mortuary science accreditation site visit teams?
- Research Question 2: What are the major reasons reported by these external evaluators for involvement in the accreditation of mortuary science programs, and do these reasons vary by professional role within the external evaluation team (i.e. team chair, mortuary science practitioner, or mortuary science educator)?
• Research Question 3: What do external evaluators perceive as important information sources for the site team process, and do these perceptions differ by role within the evaluation team?

• Research Question 4: What type of training and support do external evaluators that are involved in mortuary science accreditation report they have received and is there a need for more support?

For this study, reasons for individual participators in mortuary science program accreditation site teams will be recognized through constructs assessed by the Participation Reasons Scale developed by Grotelueschen, Harnish, Kenny, and Cervero in (1980) and adapted by Bauer in 1996. Self-reported responses and professional and demographic characteristics will be identified by individuals answers to particular demographic and professional questions. The external site team evaluators’ perceived importance of accreditation information sources will be assessed utilizing questions adapted and developed by prioritizing the five major information sources that are available to them: program application information, program self-study, on-site documents, stakeholder information, and within team member collaboration. Training and support for the roles that external evaluators play on the accreditation teams will be assessed using telephone interview protocols developed specifically for this study.
Figure 3: Mortuary science accreditation process
Assumptions

The basic assumptions associated with this study include the following:

- It is assumed that all external evaluators are part of the ABFSE and have had training in the accreditation and evaluation of Mortuary Science Programs.
- It is assumed that all external evaluators who took part in external accreditation site visits are all volunteers.

Limitations

The basic limitations associated with this study include the following:

- This study is limited to the external accreditation teams who participate in the ongoing national accreditation of Mortuary Science Programs. All the individuals involved are either currently or have been part of accreditation teams.
- This study is also limited to those schools accredited by the ABFSE, the only accreditation body for mortuary science programs in the United States.

Delimitations

Delimitation or as a characteristic that narrows or limits the scope of the study includes the following:

- The study is delimited to ABFSE standards of practice for accreditation.
- The study is delimited to individuals that participated as external evaluators during the time period of 1999 – 2007.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions of terms are used for this study:
Accreditation: is defined by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (2004) as a term meaning a voluntary program sponsored by a non-governmental agency, in which trained external peer reviewers evaluate a program or organization’s compliance with preestablished performance standards.

Program self-study: is a comprehensive, internal effort to assess the effectiveness of a program in light of its own publicly stated objectives as well as national accreditation standards.

Peer evaluation: is defined in this study as the expert judgment from outside the institution usually consisting of professional educators, funeral service practitioners or specialists, and team chairs representing the public interest.

Institutional and/or program integrity: is defined as whether an institution and/or program is what it says it is and does what it says it does at any given point of time.

External evaluators: is defined as the individual members of the site visit teams, usually consisting of an educator, a practitioner, and a team chair. Both the educator and practitioner are related to funeral service but the team chair cannot be related in any way.

Standards: For the purpose of this study, standards refer to rules set forth by the American Board of Funeral Service Education, which is the accreditation agency that is to be followed by the mortuary science program under all circumstances.

Summary

This chapter provided an initial examination of who the external evaluators are that participate in mortuary science accreditation and demographics of the external evaluators that are related to their selected roles for participating. There is also an examination of
external evaluators varying roles and their differing perceptions of what are the important sources for the site team process. The research establishes that the participants’ reasons for participating in mortuary science program accreditations vary by their roles on the team. The reasons for participation will be based upon factors identified in the PRS (Grotelueschen, 1985) and professional and demographics information identified in the Information Preference Scale (IPS) developed by Bauer (1996). The research examines types of training and follow-up support networks that team members receive in their roles and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the training.

By comprehending the reasons why individuals participate in accreditation site visit teams and the importance of the information sources they receive assisting them to make their decisions, and influences their recruitment, retention, and more external evidence as well as useful program evaluation and assessment techniques can be noted. This research provides information that is lacking in the professional academic arena regarding the comprehensive framework involved in the accreditation of professional mortuary science programs. By investigation of the variables influencing the importance of various information sources during the accreditation, efforts can be made to develop a more effective accreditation approach to mortuary science programs.
Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Introduction to Accreditation

The purpose of this chapter is to review research and literature related to this study. This literature review includes information about accreditation in general, processes and types of accreditation, participatory evaluation, and information on the Participation Reasons Scale (PRS) and the way it is used. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, 2000) defines accreditation as a process of external quality review used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and educational programs for quality assurance and quality improvement. The acquisition of accreditation when a program is initiated and the continuation of accreditation by ongoing reassessment are critical for many programs. Wellman (2003) reports that accreditation plays a duel role of promoting internal quality improvement and a quasi-regulatory role of external quality assessment. Accreditation: enables institutions to apply for federal, corporate, and foundation funds; aids the department in competition for campus resources; and provides for students the higher status associated with a degree from an accredited institution (Burke, 2003). Accreditation standards are important to the process and within those standards student learning outcomes should be articulated for programs and institutions especially evidence of student knowledge, skills and attitudes (Whittlesey, 2005). According to Wilson (2007), accreditation signifies that an institution or program has a purpose appropriate to higher education and has the resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that purpose. Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder (2009),
state that accreditation is a mostly peer-review process that is responsible for a largely unheralded culture of continuous improvement in many schools nationwide. In the United States, accreditation is carried out by private, nonprofit organizations designed for this specific purpose (CHEA, 2002).

**History of Accreditation**

Institutions and programs in the United States once used accreditation as a voluntary system of self-improvement. Barker and Smith (1998) indicate accreditation on a nationwide basis traces its roots to 1906 at a meeting of the National Association of State Universities followed by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools drawing up a set of standards to accredit colleges in 1909. Specialized accreditation had its start when the American Medical Association developed a rating system for medical schools in 1905. It has expanded today into a process overseen by the federal government (Basken, 2008). The United States, through private educational associations of regional or specialized scope, has adopted criteria that are intended to reflect the qualities of sound educational programs and has developed procedures for evaluating institutions or programs to determine whether or not they are operating at basic levels of perceived quality. The basic accreditation procedure in a typical accreditation system includes setting standards by the agency, evaluating on-site, publication of the decision, and monitoring by the accreditation agency (Education, U.S.D., 2008).

**Purposes of Accreditation**

The characteristics of accreditation and purposes have been evolving over the years, and they continue to change with some features remaining constant, such as the voluntary
nature of the process and the self-regulatory components (Alstete, 2004). Accreditation is the primary way by which colleges, universities, and programs assure academic performance, integrity and quality to students and to the public. Tellez (2003) states that contemporary stakeholders are no longer interested in the content of learning standards as much as they are concerned that the standards are being measured and tracked through accreditation. The institutions are held accountable for how they rate among their peer institutions in meeting the standards. Ewell (2002) states that accreditation agencies strongly believe that it is important for institutions to be held accountable to minimum standards, but they should also engage in extended, meaningful, and participatory examinations of their own operations and effectiveness. Henry (2008) states that accrediting organizations direct institutions of higher learning in their efforts to assure educational quality, enhance institutional effectiveness, and foster continuous improvement. Accreditation is required for students to gain access to federal funds such as student grants and loans. Institutions and programs must be accredited in order for students to have a smooth transfer of courses and programs among colleges and universities. When employers evaluate a job applicant’s credentials, they want to know that the person they are hiring graduated from an accredited institution that has met a set of national evaluation standards (CHEA, 2002).

**Functions of Accreditation**

Accreditation serves two roles: the institutional quality-improvement role which can be traced to the beginnings of accreditation, and the quality-assurance role that has only been in place since the 1950’s when the federal government began its system of
recognizing accreditors as reliable authorities concerning the quality of education or training offered by the institutions of higher education (Brittingham, 2008).

Accreditation has three nuances: it is a process applied to applicant organizations; it is the label that institutions or programs may acquire as a result of the accreditation procedures; and accreditation is an abstract notion of a formal authorizing power enacted via official decisions about recognition through the accreditation process (Haakstad, 2001).

Accreditation of postsecondary institutions in the United States serves multiple functions. Accreditation is used to verify that an institution or program is meeting an established set of program standards. Acceptable learning institutions are identified in order to assist prospective students. Through accreditation, institutions are assisted in determining the acceptability of transfer credits. Accreditation helps to recognize institutions and programs for the investment of private and public funds. Institutions are protected against harmful internal and external pressure through their participation in the accreditation process. Accreditation creates goals for self-improvement of weaker programs and stimulates the rising of the educational standards among institutions. Wolff (2005) states that the power and influence of accreditation arises from several key characteristics: it uses a peer-review process that is well adapted to the academic culture; unlike any other process of external review, it encompasses all higher education institutions in the United States; and it focuses heavily on institutional/program development and improvement. According to Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder (2009) the accreditation process today does play an important role in the self-improvement processes of many schools. They further go on to say that the requirement for a year or more of self-study
before an accreditation site visit, focuses the attention of many teachers and leadership on areas where reform is necessary. Accordingly the observations and recommendations of visiting teams often reinforce this process and provide useful feedback to institutional staffs seeking to improve programs. The process of accreditation has raised the bar for institutional planning and evaluation by involving faculty and staff comprehensively in the process. Accreditation establishes criteria for professional certification and licensure and for upgrading courses that offer such preparation (Education, U.S.D., 2008).

**Regional/Institutional Accreditation**

Accreditation according to Anderson, Spooner, Calhoun and Spooner (2007), indicates that a college or school of education meets standards set by the profession by undergoing a rigorous external review conducted by trained and experienced professionals. Regional accreditation, according to the CHEA (2002), reviews entire institutions which are both degree granting and nonprofit. Almost all institutions are comprehensive. This category of accreditation reflects the status of public and private nonprofit universities. Wellman (2003) reports regional accreditation is the largest and, historically, the oldest form of accreditation. According to Baker (2002), regional accreditations evaluate the entire institution using qualitative standards that emphasize achievement of institutional mission and goals and do not specifically monitor or accredit individual programs or subject content areas. Regional accreditation is simultaneously the primary mechanism for quality assurance and one of the major avenues for self-improvement (Baker, 2002). Regional accreditators perform several common functions: ensuring that the institution has clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives; ensuring that the institution has
conditions under which institutional objectives can reasonably be achieved; ensuring that
the institution is reasonably organized, staffed, and supported to continue to do so; assuring
academic quality to students and the public; providing access to federal funds; easing
transfers between colleges and universities, and engendering labor market confidence in the
value of credentials (Biswas, 2006).

Regional accreditation helps to institutionalize and operationalize accountability in
higher education through accreditation criteria and review processes that require
institutions to collect, format, report, and use information to improve and demonstrate the
effectiveness of their programs and services (Welsh & Metcalf, 2003). Institutional
accreditation, because it applies to an entire institution, indicates that each of the
institution’s parts is contributing to the achievement of the institution’s objectives, although
not necessarily all at the same level of quality (CHEA, 2002). Institutional accreditation
provides a license for the institution to operate based on an evaluation of whether the
institution meets specific minimum standards, such as staff qualification, research
activities, student intake, and learning resources (Harvey, 2004).

Program/Specialized/Professional Accreditation

The CHEA (2002) states that specialized accreditors operate throughout the
country reviewing programs and some single-purpose institutions. All follow a set of
accreditation standards that are largely driven by mission and seek to guide institutional
development and improvement especially in student learning outcomes. Outcomes
assessment has risen in importance in accreditation, but specific outcomes assessment
alone in specialized accreditation is not sufficient to increase the probability that a quality
education will be provided. According to Garrity and Finney (2007), measures of inputs, procedures, and processes should be used in conjunction with measures of outcomes. Institutions and programs, often with the accreditation process, find themselves in two kinds of binds: on one side, stakeholders may find themselves burned out from the multiple efforts required of them for program review, accreditations, and outcomes assessments that are required; on the other side, institutions/programs may try to relieve the burden from the various stakeholders by having just a few faculty or staff members do everything required for the accreditation, therefore thwarting the purposes of program review and accreditation according to Lincoln (1990). Institutions/programs are or should be focused on the CHEA requirements and are focused their self-study and on-site visit by the team of external evaluators designated by the accrediting association.

Spaulding (2008) addressed the strengths and weakness of using external evaluators. Spaulding (2008) indicates that the primary strength for having an external evaluator is to increase the objectivity of the data collection. Spaulding (2008) further indicates that external evaluators are often faced with the difficulty of establishing trust with the stakeholders involved with the program that they are evaluating. According to El-Khawas (1998), specialized accreditation agencies have not followed a policy of allowing each program to develop on its own. Instead, she says they have taken responsibility for defining what would be considered best practice in their field. Their statement of best practice is found in the form of evaluation standards, and this is the framework for all accrediting activities.
Accreditation information process.

Dill and Massy (1996) state the accreditation process determines if an institution or a program meets a threshold quality criterion which assures the public of the existence of minimum educational standards. According to Scriven (1991), the accreditation process has two phases. In the first phase, the institution undertakes a self-study and self-evaluation exercise against its own mission statement. In the second phase, being familiar with similar institutions, the accreditation organization sends in a team of people, to examine the self-study and its results, while also looking at a very large number of particular features of the institution using data supplied by the institution. The accreditation process is based on a set of standards established by each accreditation organization in collaboration with the educational institution to be followed by every institution, and program they accredit. According to the CHEA (2002), the standards, guidelines, and policies used by the accreditor during accreditation vary by the type of program or institution that is reviewed, typically the institutional features of mission, resources, organization, students learning outcomes, as well as curriculum, instruction, and student and faculty support are also measured.

Accreditation is criterion-referenced in that it compares observed performance against preset standards usually determined by the accrediting agency, according to Dill and Massy (1996). Gratch-Lindauer (2002) states that the standards are part of an accreditation policy manual that contains a description of the accreditation process, the eligibility requirements, relevant policies the institutions must address in their self-study reports, and other documentation developed to assist the program or institution with
preparing their self-studies and conducting evaluation and assessment within their specific areas. The standards are designed to address such areas as expected student academic accomplishments, curriculum, faculty, academic support systems, and financial capacity. These standards are fluid in that they are consistently revised and updated to meet current federal and public professional expectations. According to Brennan and Austin (2003), the processes used to strengthen curriculum, develop faculty, improve instruction, and enhance intellectual activity determines the direction and rate of program improvement, and plays an important role in accreditation as well. Significant internal and external pressures for facilitating the accreditation processes exist in educational institutions today, among them the very real need for federal funding support, the choices among the many specialized accreditation agencies, the increasing costs of accreditation, the internal and external pressure to improve and verify student learning, the value of useful feedback from peer institutions, and the interdepartmental competition for institutional resources (Alstete, 2004). Internally, faculty are often asked to create a balance between their faculty loads and the demands of working on the accreditation data for self-studies and site visits without any significant compensation for their work (Keil & Haughton 2007).

Accreditation is an ongoing process. Grotelueschen (1986) stressed the significance of demanding performance and accountability of programs through assessment. In general, there are five key components to accreditation: self-study, peer review, site visit, action of accrediting institution, and monitoring of institutions and programs. Self-study involves the institution of the program preparing an in-depth, written self-evaluation study which measures its performance based on accrediting organizational standards. Primarily faculty,
administrators, and public members conduct peer review of the self-study. The written self-study is one of the most critical elements in achieving accreditation or reaccreditation. According to Barker and Smith (1998), the self-study is the heart of the accreditation process. Representatives from all areas of the college community are involved in the preparation of the self-study according to Laun (2004). Dill and Massy (1996) state that self-studies represent an institution’s evaluation of its own performance in relation to the accrediting agency’s standards, as well as its own particular aspirations, based on both performance indicators and subjective factors. It has two primary purposes. The first is to help improve the quality of the institution. The second is to identify goals that are clearly stated and appropriate, considering the mission of the institution and the human, fiscal, and physical resources available to the institution. The self-study is a primary way of communication for interpreting institutional strategies for the accreditation criteria.

DeSilets (2007) states that the self-study demonstrates how a program complies with accreditation standards by telling a “story” about the staff, faculty, students, processes, activities, policies, and procedures. The “story” is told by the program using organizational charts, position descriptions, minutes, program files and evaluations, annual reports, financial information, and interviews.

The accrediting organization sends a visiting site team, members of which are volunteer, to review the institution and program. The site team consists of peer evaluators, who are usually full or part-time staff at various accredited institutions or programs (Simpson, 2004). For example, according to DeSilets (2007), nursing accreditation site teams consist of volunteer appraisers; with minimum of master’s degrees; from various
parts of the country; and work in various nursing roles. All members of the team are experienced in nursing accreditation. The site team for mortuary science accreditation consists of three distinct member roles: the higher education educator as team chair, a mortuary science educator expert, and the mortuary science practitioner (ABFSE, 2007). The team is selected by the accrediting agency and visits the program first hand to determine if the applicant meets the established standards. Wadsworth (1997) reports how institutions and programs view the external evaluation team visit as both positive and negative. It is felt that external teams ask questions that have not been asked before. They notice and “hear” things in the fieldwork phase that internal stakeholders had not noticed or heard as clearly, come up with novel ways of explaining things, or show things in a new light, break new ground with solution and act as a catalyst for change, if needed. Wadsworth (1997) further goes on to discuss issues that institutions and programs have with the external evaluation teams.

The team is viewed, at times, as asking questions that were considered wide of the mark, they reported on things that stakeholders had long known or that were not central to the practical task or critical questions at hand, they explained things in ways that annoyed stakeholders or made them feel misunderstood, under-represented, or wronged and the team recommended precisely what some stakeholders had been unsuccessfully suggesting for decades or missed recommending what the stakeholders been unsuccessfully suggesting for decades and sometimes the team did not listen to what stakeholders were trying to tell them. Alstete (2004) states that during a typical site visit of several days, committee members examine data and conduct interviews to evaluate the quality and accuracy of the
self-study and to ascertain whether the program is in compliance with the accreditation standards of the specialized association. Alstete (2004) further indicates that the committee often offers written advice to the program, develops a consensus on its findings, and completes a draft report that is presented orally to institutional officials on the last day of the visit. According to Scholtz, et al (2008), the site team issues a written report of its findings with the review of the report and final action being enforced by the accreditation body. Wawrzynski and Davidhizar (2004) state that team members communicate an attitude of professionalism and fairness as they focus on their individual duties in writing the report. The team report, given as an exit interview, contains observations on strengths and weaknesses in relation to the accreditation organizations’ standards as well as criteria and suggestions for improvement. According to Young and Hagerty (2007), the exit interview serves an important role in the accreditation process. It is useful in identifying the program’s strengths and validates existing practices that work. The quality of an institution or program’s accreditation experience can depend significantly upon the quality of the site visiting team.

Accrediting organizations are commissioned to take an action and make a decision about the accreditation status of the institution and its programs after careful review of the self-study and the site visit information. Stufflebeam (2000) indicates that program evaluation and assessment is a vital instrument of accountability, consumer safety, consumer welfare and improvement. According to Stufflebeam (2000) it is important in conducting sound and viable evaluations and assessments that they be grounded in professional standards, the team communicates functionally with clients and stakeholders.
throughout the process and does everything possible to make the evaluation a key aspect of accountability and progress. Accreditors and evaluators are obliged to provide extensive information about how accreditation operates and are explicit about their standards, policies and practices (Eaton, 2007). Upon satisfaction that the institution or program meets its standards, the accrediting agency grants accreditation or preaccreditation status and lists the institution or program in an official publication with similarly accredited or preaccredited institutions or programs.

All mortuary science institutions and programs are consistently monitored and are reevaluated every seven years including a self-study and site visit. The purpose of the reevaluation is to ascertain whether continuation of its accredited or preaccredited status is warranted (CHEA, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

There are concerns about accreditation such as the self-study being a temporary solution to an institutions/programs problems, accountability, thoroughness, and potential discord between formative and summative goals. CHEA (2002) states that although difficulties such as these need to be addressed, institutions and programs are working with regional and specialized accreditation systems to facilitate successful recognition of issues and effective renewal of the institution and or program.

**Evaluation Utilization**

The accreditation process requires a great deal of work from the institution, the program, stakeholders and the accreditation organization. Shulha and Cousins (1997) state that more and more evaluators are taking great pains to identify the type of use sought by program stakeholders and to use the evaluation process to promote continuous information
dialogue which encourages the evaluators and stakeholders to share responsibility for generating, transmitting and continuing useful evaluation information.

The utilization construct has been traditionally conceptualized in terms of three types of effects or accreditation findings: (1) instrumental, the provision of support for discrete decisions to be made; (2) conceptual, as in an education or learning function; and (3) symbolic, the persuasive or political use of evaluation to reaffirm decisions already made or to further a particular agenda (King, 1988). The self-study for accreditation requires extensive documentation by the institution and/or program and is an internal evaluation whose information is utilized to provide evidence of the quality of the institution or program. Kornfeld, et al. (2003) states that the self-study asks the institution or program to determine what they want to know about themselves and their programs and what methodologies can be used to gain that information. The self-study encourages the program to look beyond what is easily apparent in itself and its’ design and function and to try to see all of it in new ways.

The self-study provides a foundation for planning at the institution leading to ongoing institutional research and self-analysis, enhancing institutional openness, and providing staff-development. The steps in the self-study process often include preparing for and designing the self-study, organizing the study, monitoring the process, using peers and external stakeholders, and integration of the cycles of study and planning. The mechanics of the self-study process itself needs attention so that all participants stay with the stated intentions and study goals, with clarification, consensus building, completeness and priority when needed. It is important to continually review accreditation standards
once the self-study is underway for use of valid criterion levels applicable to the educational program or institution that is being assessed (Young, Chambers, & Kells, 1983).

Kells (1999) states that many institutions and programs utilize the self-study as an incentive for change. It becomes the foundation for revising institutional and program goals, objectives, and mission statements. There are potential barriers to the self-study that can arise including weak organization and governance resulting in unclear goals, lack of readily available and useful data, staffing issues, and interaction among all stakeholders involved, partly because of the academic nature of in depth analysis for all problems, tendencies to avoid conflict, histories of poor planning procedures, and a dislike of direction or guidance from other educators (Illback & Zins, 1995; Goodstein, 1978).

The accreditation site visit teams perform external evaluation by testing the authenticity of the self-study information and looking for areas that require improvement that may have been missed. In order to ensure reliability over the various site visit teams, there is always at least one experienced site team member as part of the team according to Lawrenz, Keiser and Lavoie (2003). During the site visit the site team interviews representatives of institutions or programs to ensure that any concerns that have surfaced will be addressed. The team interviews administrators, instructors, department chairs, support staff, advisory board members, and students to increase the probability that the self-study information is valid and reliable according to Illback and Zins (1995). The site visit typically takes place over several days during which team members examine data and conduct interviews to evaluate the quality and accuracy of the self-study and to ascertain
whether the institution is in compliance with the accreditation standards set by the specialized accreditation agency. The site team must prepare a report by analyzing, interpreting, and summarizing the information gathered during the visit according to Lawrenz, Keiser and Lavoie (2003).

The North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (2004), states that the written report of the visiting team of professional academic peers assesses how well the institution and program improves itself. The report is put in a form that can be quickly and easily assimilated by the programs and their stakeholders. According to Torres, Preskill, and Piontek (1997), some evaluators found that these reports, when presented at the exit interview, were accepted by the program and stakeholders with positive responses and collaborative efforts to make improvements as suggested. Other evaluators described the response to the report as resistance to any negative findings hindering their reporting efforts and in some cases misinterpretation of results prevailed causing politically charged situations that dealt with hidden agendas, turf protection and gate keeping issues. Despite these issues, the written report is sent to the accreditation organization. The accreditation organization examines both the internal and external evaluation materials and determines the accreditation status of the institution or program deciding whether to grant, continue, reaffirm, or withdraw accreditation.

Findings from the external evaluation fall into one of three categories: the way in which the decision makers use the results; factors that foster use and the long-term consequences when evaluations are used. The key to how the findings are used are
indicated by dissemination—putting the evaluation or accreditation information results into the hands of the intended users (Lawrenz, Gullickson & Toal, 2007).

**Participatory Evaluation**

All educators, (faculty, administrators, and staff) at the institutional and program level must interact and participate in the self-study and accreditation of their areas. Faculty, according to Welsh and Metcalf (2003), is sometimes left out of the process. The institution must demonstrate the impact of instruction on student learning and that faculty members are actually using the results of these assessments to improve instruction. According to Wergin (2005), accrediting bodies should expect the institutions and programs to routinely define, collect, interpret, and use evidence of student learning outcomes. The institutions and programs should be responsible for establishing clear statements and student learning outcomes and for collecting, interpreting, and using the evidence of student achievement. This evidence should be used by the accreditation agency in making judgments about academic quality and accredited status with the institutions and programs sharing responsibility with the accreditation agency for providing clear and credible information to constituents about what students learn. This participatory assessment can be challenging because all participants hold different conceptions about the meaning of quality student learning. It is a key component for accreditation and the self-study process that the faculty participates in and supports it as true stakeholders in the process. Cousins and Earl (1992) see stakeholder evaluation as simply an extension of participatory evaluation. The participatory approach in program accreditation includes
empowerment, a utilization-focus, participatory involvement by everyone, stakeholder-base, and user oriented.

**Stakeholder Participation**

Stakeholders are an important part of the educational institutions and their programs. Stakeholders are typically defined as those with a vested interest in the focus of the evaluation or accreditation (Mark & Shotland, 1985). According to Blalock, Copeland and De Valenzuela (2005), active participation of all stakeholders can have an impact on the programs accreditation. Stakeholders’ participation in program accreditation and collaboration between stakeholders and the program accreditation team has emerged as key components of a good evaluation process. Many program stakeholders are program experts, which enable them to improve the evaluators understanding of the program being accredited. By tapping stakeholders’ expertise, evaluators are not constrained to using the limited program expertise that they have before beginning their accreditation or evaluation or that they gain on their own during the process (Brandon, 1998).

Stake (1983) historically defined the stakeholder as someone with a vested interest, whose life would be affected by the program and whose decision can affect the future of the program. Reineke (1991), reports that the more involved the stakeholder becomes with the evaluation, the more targeted its results will be and thus the more used the results will be, the key being it is quality involvement. The key to good stakeholders’ participation, according to Reineke (1991) is to identify the specific stakeholders who will be involved early. Patton (1997) indicated how important stakeholder involvement is and how they need to feel empowered to participate, collaborate and focus on the process so that they can
have ownership, see the relevance in the process, understand the process, become involved in the process and work to build and improve the process for them. Many critical decisions that affect the evaluation process such as determining goals and strategy occur early in the process. The input from the stakeholders should be part of all phases of evaluation.

Evaluation activities that draw stakeholders into the evaluation process, such as early and continuous involvement in accreditation self-study design, data process and data analysis can help stakeholders see the connection between accreditation and decisions. Skolits and Boser (2008) indicate that evaluators need to identify not just the immediate and readily identifiable stakeholders such as students and parents but also seek out community members and groups that have a high interest in participating in the programs assessment and evaluation. Stakeholders and evaluators need to build in time for reflection and dialogue needs as part of the evaluation so they can consider at the onset which are the appropriate boundaries to ease and which are the ones to retain (Torres, Stone, Butkus, Hook, Casey, & Arens, 2000). According to Dawson and D’Amico (1985), several benefits for the stakeholders involvement in accreditation include communication and perceptions of evaluation relevance and credibility, and commitment to the program of study. Barrick and Cogliano (1993) reported stakeholders are often disadvantaged on the many time demands required of them for active participation. Milstein and Wetterhall (1999) emphasized that engaging stakeholders involves fostering input, participation, and ownership sharing among those who have an investment in how the evaluation is conducted and what will be done with the results. Stakeholder involvement has the potential to: (1) make the evaluation more responsive to various stakeholders’ perspectives
and information needs; (2) increase the validity of the evaluation when stakeholders engage in dialogue to interpret findings and construct meaning; (3) increase stakeholders inquiry skills; and (4) help make stakeholders more sophisticated consumers of, and participants in, other evaluation efforts (Torres & Preskill, 1999). Stakeholders can include, but are not limited to students, faculty, administrators, advisory groups, staff, and even parents. The stakeholders’ needs must be recognized and addressed by the institutions as integral parts of the self-study and accreditation process. The focus of accreditation should be on things that affect stakeholder preferences, general and special needs, curriculum focus, faculty and staff composition, costs, and student placement after completion of their curriculum. Some stakeholders resist being active participants in the accreditation process. Many faculty members continue to resist efforts to promote a systems approach that requires programs to assess outcomes in light of explicit goals, objectives, and standards, and then to initiate improvements primarily because the administration does not necessarily see them as active participants according to Briggs, Stark, & Rowland-Poplawski, (2003). Some stakeholders aren’t always given as much inclusion in the process as they should, in particular students. Students should be an integral part of the accreditation process. According to McDowell and Sambell (1999) students need to be included in assessment areas because they are able to judge whether the assessments requirements are made clear to them and whether they are offered useful feedback and opportunities to improve; secondly, students do understand that assessment can help them learn and that certification of genuine learning is worth more than certification of poor and sub-standard achievements and thirdly students can make
judgments about assessments that are largely independent of their own level of performance and offer constructive feedback.

**Evaluator Participation**

Accreditation evaluators generally receive training which includes accreditation standards manuals, site visit training session, and onsite training. Much of the skills acquired by the potential external evaluators come from on the site training as they do institutional and program external site visits. Evaluators participate in program and institution site visits on a voluntary basis.

According to Cousins and Earl (1992), the evaluator role is adapted to various needs seen in participatory evaluation. At times the evaluator may take on various roles within the accreditation process, whether it is the team chair, the practitioner, educational expert, or the accreditation professional standards consultant.

**Participation Reasons Scale**

Grotelueschen, Harnish and Kenny (1980) developed the Participation Reasons Scale (PRS) as a means to investigate the professional’s needs of various adult learners taking continuing education courses. In the past any type of scale that was used as a measurement for adult learning participation was never adequately used to measure professional adults. The professional adult is very individualized in their needs as participants as to why they participate and what they see as their benefits.

The professionals grouped by occupational status represent a different reference group that is homogenous. They participate in learning activities that are important to their professional careers. In most cases, especially for the health care and mortuary science
professionals, continuing professional education is mandated by their profession, place of employment or state. The benefits earned will extend to society, employers, accreditation agencies, and professional organizations Bauer (1996).

Grotelueschen, Harnish and Kenny (1980) designed the original PRS scale as a 19 item scale used to measure participation of business professionals taking continuing professional education. The PRS over time was extended to 30 items and revised to focus on five factors that describe the professionals’ reasons for participating in continuing education. The factors are: 1) professional improvement and development; 2) professional commitment; 3) personal benefit and job security; 4) professional service; and 5) collegial learning and interaction. There is considerable evidence that the instrument has face and content validity according to Grotelueschen, (1985).

The PRS has been used to study the reasons for participation of various professional occupations. Grzyb, Graham, and Donaldson (1998) utilized the PRS to study the effects that academic preparation, leadership, functional roles and occupational specialty have on the Army engineers’ reasons for voluntarily becoming involved in training and education. McCamey (2003) used the PRS to study why individuals in the U.S. Nuclear Power Industry chose to participate in continuing professional education. Smith and Burgin (1991) utilized the PRS to study the motivation of professional and paraprofessional librarians towards participation in continuing education programs. Cervero (1981) used the PRS with physicians to ascertain their reasons for participating in continuing professional education. Effective training programs are those based on the needs of the learners and require an understanding of the reasons people participate; reasons that affect the instructional
strategies selected, the content covered, and the evaluation procedures used (Grotelueschen 1985).

Summary

This chapter discussed literature in relation to accreditation, its history, process and types. It included a review of literature related to the use of the PRS, its relationship to participatory evaluation and accreditation. It also included an extensive look at resources available and their use to external site visit teams was examined in detail as was the complete accreditation process. Stakeholder participation was examined and its additional strengths that it adds to the accreditation process.

The references that have been examined in this chapter attest to the importance of accreditation to higher education programs and institutions. The processes that are a part of all phases of accreditation and the people involved in all extensions of the process were examined as well in order to establish the background for the questions related to this study.
Chapter Three
Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to examine the role and perceptions of those involved in the external evaluation process of mortuary science programs. The focus will be on participants of the study, instruments used to gather data, the research design utilized, and a description of the procedure used to conduct the study.

Phase 1 Survey of External Site Team Members

Sample

The population of this study consisted of external evaluation team members who participated in mortuary science program accreditation site visits from 1999 to 2007. Mortuary science programs are governed by the ABFSE, which, in turn is governed by the Committee on Accreditation (COA). The target sample was all external site accreditation site team members utilized from 1999 to 2007. To obtain access to this population, a request for the names of individuals who have served as external evaluators was made to the Executive Director of the American Board of Funeral Service Education.

The ABFSE is the only nationally recognized accreditation body for the mortuary science profession. The Board has as its purpose the accreditation of all mortuary science programs, both private and public, and utilizes a strict standardization process to ensure creditability of it regulatory mechanisms. A list of 41 participants in the Board’s sponsored external accreditation process was provided to the researcher for use in this study. During the initial survey process one individual was deceased and the surveyor was excused due to
conflict of interest. All 39 individuals were sent surveys with 37 responding to the first mailing and 2 responding to the second mailing for a total of 39 for a 100% sample response.

The participants’ profile, including demographics, educational levels and involvement roles in Mortuary Science Programs are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3 of this chapter.

Table 1

*Survey Response Rate of Mortuary Science Program Accreditation Site Teams by Primary Role*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accreditation Site Team Roles</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Overall Sample Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Educator</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortuary Science Educator</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortuary Science Practitioner</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals were asked during the survey what their primary roles were during the accreditation process. The higher education educator as team chair always held the same role because they had no connection to mortuary science education and represent higher education standards. The mortuary science educator and mortuary science practitioner roles could be held by the same person but at different site team visits. Hence, during one visit
the individual might have the role of educator and during a different visit the role of funeral service practitioner. This has only occurred with 4 mortuary science practitioners. These four individuals at one time have been educators that have left education or only work part time and returned to the field as practitioners full time.

Table 2

Demographic Profile: Experience with Accreditation and Preparation of Self-Studies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences/Choices</th>
<th>N=39</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in self-study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 times</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 times</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times as an external evaluator for another accreditation group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 times</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 times</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant in accreditation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Compilation of data across interviews and surveys.
Almost all respondents (79%) regardless of their role had some experience as interim stakeholders in accreditation and had formerly been involved in creating a self-study for a program more than 6 times in their professional career. On the other hand, 21% of the respondents, even though they had participated on accreditation site team visits, had never been involved in the creation of a self-study. When surveyed as to how many times they were external evaluators for any accreditation agency, 90% indicated that they had served previously as external evaluators for various accreditation agencies with 10% indicating that they had never participated as an external evaluator for any accreditation agency. Sixty-two percent of survey respondents indicated that they had never served as consultants in program accreditation whereas 38% of the respondents indicated that they had. Interview responses enhance the status of prior experience in accreditation and their roles. The majority of the prior experiences were as non-paid information providers to the self-study phase of academic accreditation; most of these stakeholders now serve as higher education representatives on mortuary science accreditation site visit teams.

As part of the demographics to ascertain their background, respondents were asked what positions they held at their institutions, or work settings, and to indicate, by percentage, how much of their time applied to each area totaling 100%. Respondents as indicated by table 3, often hold multiple roles within their institutional settings. For example, an individual might be a part-time instructor for a program and at the same time be a full time funeral service practitioner. Some individuals, although retired from academia, still serve on accreditation teams as funeral service practitioners. Individuals that responded to the other roles also held external positions outside of mortuary science education.
Table 3

**Professional Characteristics: Position at Institution or Setting and What Percentage of Time Applies to Each Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage of time in position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor at an educational program</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director/Department Head of an Educational program</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean of an educational school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funeral Service practitioner</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired from academia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instrumentation**

A survey instrument, consisting of three separate sections, was used to gather the major constructs of demographics, the Participation Reasons Scale, and the Information Preference Scale. A brief description of each section or construct follows.

**Section 1: Demographics**

The demographics section of the survey asked the respondents to provide information about variables related to their professional background as external evaluators as well as variables related to their participation as part of the accreditation process. The demographic information included gender, age, location, highest level of education attained, prior experience as a consultant in program accreditation, number of times involved, role as a participant on the site team, what positions they held at the institution or
setting, involvement in creating a self-study, involvement in evaluating a self-study, and participation as an external evaluator for an accreditation agency. The gender measure consisted of a dichotomous (Male/Female) selection type item as did the variable consultant in program accreditation measure (yes, no). All other variables offered a multiple level response choice from a list. This information can be seen in Appendix II.

Section 2: Participation Reasons Scale (PRS)

The Participation Reasons Scale (PRS), developed by Grotelueschen (1980), assesses individuals’ reasons for participating in continuing professional education. This scale has been used both with health science professional groups as well as in non-health science fields. The scale consists of 30 items utilizing a 7-point Likert-type scale with one indicating “not important” and seven indicating “very important” (Grotelueschen, 1985). The six subscales that were examined were: 1) professional development and improvement, with a total of ten items; 2) improve professional service to families, with a total of four items; 3) personal benefit and professional capacity, with a total of six items; 4) professional commitment, with a total of four items; 5) collegial learning and interaction, with a total of four items; and 6) maintain professional role and abilities with a total of two items.

The PRS has gone through adaptations to maximize reliability and validity. The PRS-19, consisting of nineteen questions, was the first and most abbreviated form of the instrument (Grotelueschen & Caulley, 1977). The second form was expanded to a thirty item instrument (Grotelueschen, 1985). The thirty item version was developed and utilized to assess judges, public health administrators, hospital administrators, pharmacists, dentists and other healthcare and non-health care professionals as seen in Appendix III.
Grotelueschen (1985) reported that acceptable levels of reliability for the thirty-five-item scale as measured by the internal consistency of the clusters were exhibited with coefficients ranging from a low of 0.78 to a high of 0.92. According to Grotelueschen (1985) all but one factor had reliability greater than 0.70 Cronbach’s alpha. As evidenced in Table 4, Bauer (1996) found that the six reliability factors ranged from a low of 0.57 to a high of 0.91. For the full 30 item scale based upon the responses of 302 evaluators Cronbach’s alpha was 0.94 for Bauer (1996). The current study found that the six reliability factors ranged from a low of 0.73 to a high of 0.93. For the full 30 item scale

Table 4

*Bauer and Reinhard Alpha Reliability for PRS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Factors</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Bauer Alpha Reliability</th>
<th>Reinhard Alpha Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development and Improvement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Professional Service</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Benefit and Professional Capacity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Commitment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegial Learning and Interaction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain Professional Role and Abilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
based upon the responses of 39 evaluators’ Cronbach’s alpha was 0.93 for the current study as indicated in Table 4.

According to Grotelueschen (1985), the work of various researchers corroborates content and face validity of the instrument. Its use in the mortuary science field was reconfirmed in this study. Three academic administrators, all of whom have participated in professional accreditations, were given a copy of the instrument, asked to complete the instrument, and then discuss the content in terms of clarity of directions, terminology and representativeness of the instrument. Responses indicated that the use of the instrument was valid for accreditation in the mortuary science field.

**Section III: Information Preference Scale (IPS)**

The last section of the survey consisted of a modification of the Information Preference Scale (IPS) developed by Bauer (1996). The IPS consists of four subsections that represent sources of information related to accreditation and the site visit in particular. General and specific sources of information related to accreditation are examined as well as formal and informal sources of information as seen in Appendix IV.

According to Bauer (1996), the sources of accreditation information are formal, systemic, and informal. Of the five general items related to the major sources of information available to external evaluators, three represent formal sources of information in document form: application information, self-study report and on-site documents. The other two general sources, interview with site personnel and discussions with site team members, are examples of informal sources. All of the sources of information derived from the self-study report are formal sources of information.
The first subsection of the survey, Information Scale: Site Visit consisted of five items reflecting general sources of information available to external evaluators. These are application information, self-study report, on-site documents, interviews with site personnel, and discussions with site team members. Respondents rated these sources of information in their responses to a 7-point Likert-type scale (1= not important, through 7 = very important). The results produced an individual item ranking for each source of information.

The second subsection of the survey, Information Scale: Self-Study Report consisted of seven items relating to sources of information relevant to the self-study document. These sources correspond to major components of the self-study report: program goals and achievement, program organization and administration, student issues, faculty issues, curriculum issues, resources and program evaluation activities. Respondents rated these sources of information in their responses to a 7-point Likert-type scale (1= not important, through 7 = very important). The results produced an individual item ranking for each source of information.

Two parallel ranking scales follow these subsections. Respondents were asked to comparatively rank the general and specific sources of information found in the first two subsections. In the third subsection, for the general sources of information related to site visits, respondents comparatively ranked the five sources (first subsection) from 1 through 5 in order of importance (1 = most important through 5 = least important).

Research Design

This phase was descriptive in nature and addressed three research questions. Research
question one on the paper and pencil survey determined who the external evaluators were that made up mortuary science accreditation teams which attempted to identify the professional and demographic characteristics of the external evaluators. Research question two was conducted utilizing responses to the thirty statements in the PRS to investigate what reasons they report for their involvement in the mortuary science accreditation process and did their reasons vary by their professional role within the team. This was followed by research question three which utilized the IPS to determine what the external teams’ perceptions were of important information sources for the site team process and do the perceptions differ by role within the team.

**Procedures for Phase 1**

The first phase of the study was conducted using a mail out, mail back survey to collect data. A three-page survey was mailed to all individuals identified by the Executive Director of the ABFSE as being involved in the external accreditation process for the ABFSE from 1999 – 2007. The survey packets sent to participants consisted of a cover letter identifying the purpose of the study and providing assurance of confidentiality, the survey itself, and a postage paid self-addressed envelope for return of the survey. Reminder cards were sent to those who did not complete the survey, with confidentiality to be maintained by sending the reminder to all.

**Phase II Follow up Interview**

In support of a developmental mixed methodology design, a follow up interview protocol was created based upon the response received in the paper and pencil survey.
Sample

The first sample consisted of 12 individuals, four from each of the three roles of the site visit team. The interviews were voluntary and took place either in person or on the telephone. Those interviewed consisted of four team chairs, four educators, and four mortuary science practitioners.

A second sample consisted of 6 of the previously interviewed individuals, from each of the three roles of the site team. The interviews were voluntary and took place on the telephone as well as an electronic interview using a sample of 20 of individuals in various team roles. The interview consisted of higher education educators as team chairs, mortuary science educators and mortuary science practitioners.

Instrument

The first telephone interview consisted of thirteen open ended question as seen in Appendix V. Selective sampling was used to balance geographic areas with varying levels of experience in the three site team roles. The telephone interview queried what initially influenced an individual’s decision to become an external evaluator for the mortuary science accreditation process and what did they see as their benefits for participating as evaluators on a site team. Additionally, interviewees were asked about pre-training and type of follow-up support system they had available. Queries also were made to interviewees as to their role as an external evaluator and their qualifications for the position they held on the site visit team. Self-study issues and components were examined with the interviewees as well as they were queried about the individual components of the site visit. A second follow up telephone interview as seen in Appendix VI and electronic interview as
seen in Appendix VII, queried individuals; purposefully selected based on availability and geographic location inquiring thoughts on professional training and choices of importance in IPS choices.

**Research Design**

The first set of telephone interviews were conducted based on information from the paper and pencil surveys that were sent out. They asked for the 12 site team members perceptions of the accreditation process, their roles and their training and support systems. Following analysis of that data, a second set of follow up questions were asked of 6 of the previous interviewees via telephone and 20 via electronic mail to further inquire more specifically as to why they answered questions the way they did.

**Procedures for Phase 2**

Analysis from the paper and pencil surveys was used to develop follow-up interviews with a minimum of four individuals from each of the three professional roles being interviewed. Major participation factors from analysis of the surveys were used as the basis for the telephone interview. Interviewees were asked key questions related to their professional and personal development as a result of being a site visit participant. Questions related to what they perceived as benefits to them in their roles as evaluators and as individuals was examined and elaborated on. Further they were asked to elaborate on important components of their training, support system, and items of self-study documents and site visit components. A second follow-up telephone interview conducted with 6 previously interviewed individuals and an electronic mail interview was conducted with 20
site visit team members further examining more specifically their thoughts on their training, support system, and items of self-study documents and site visit components. Pattern matching and complementary data analysis were used to integrate the survey and interview responses.

Summary

This chapter presents the methodology used in this study to examine the role and perceptions of those involved in the external evaluation process of mortuary science programs. The focus of this chapter was on the participants of the study who were the external site visit teams’ members of ABFSE accreditation team. The descriptions of the procedures used to conduct the study were presented. The results of the study will be presented in chapter 4.
Chapter Four

Results of the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the current study. Results will be organized around the four research questions. Section 1 discusses who the external evaluators are participating in mortuary science accreditation site visit teams. Section 2 examines the major reasons reported by these external evaluators for their involvement in the accreditation of mortuary science programs and if these reasons vary by accreditation role within the external evaluation team (i.e. higher education educator as team chair, mortuary science practitioner or mortuary science educator as noted by most frequent role). Section 3 explores what these external evaluators perceive as important information sources for the site team process and if these perceptions differ by role within the evaluation team. Section 4 examines these in mortuary science accreditation external evaluators’ perceptions of training and support specifically addressing the training they have received, their perceptions of that training what follow-up support they received after the training, and what areas of training are in need of more extensive research. The final section presents an overall summary of the findings.

Section 1: Demographic Characteristics by Role

Research question 1: Who are the external evaluators that constitute mortuary science accreditation site visit teams?

As presented in Table 5, the external evaluation team members vary in terms of key demographic information including gender, ethnicity, age range, area of the country
from which they come and what their highest level of education.

Overall external evaluators that constitute mortuary science accreditation site visit teams are 67% males and 33% females. The higher education educators group is composed of 80% males and 20% females. The mortuary science educator experts are 61% males and 39% females while the mortuary science practitioners are 64% males and 36% females. It is notable that in examining gender across all team roles, the site team individuals are predominately males with no major differences in role.

Examination of the ethnicity of the site visit team members indicated that overall they are 90% white, 8% African-American and 2% other ethnicities. The higher education educators are 90% white and 10% other ethnicities, whereas the mortuary science educators are 94% white and 6% African-American and the mortuary science practitioners are 82% white and 18% African-American.

The age ranges for the site team members indicate a graying population with a span from 31-40 (15%), 41-50 (18%), 51-60 (26%), 61-70 (36%), and 71 and above (5%). The higher education educators identified themselves as 10% are in the age group 31-40, 10% are in the age group 51-60, 60% in the age group 61-70 and 20% in the age group 71 and above. The mortuary science educators’ age group range was 22% in the 31-40 age group, 22% in the 41-50 age group, 34% in the 51-60 age group and 22% in the 61-70 age group. The mortuary science practitioners comprised of 9% in the 31-40 age group, 27% in the 41-50 age group, 27% in the 51-60 age group and 37% in the 61-70 age groups. The higher education educators as team chairs are all higher education educators and further analysis of the data indicate that they comprise most of the 61-70 age group and all of the 71 and above age group. Figure 4 illustrates the age variations.
Table 5

*Team Members Demographics by Role; Percent by Placement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Total N=39</th>
<th>Higher Education Educators N=10</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator N=18</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner N=11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 –above</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of the country you are working from:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of Education attained:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4 Team demographics.
The accreditors represent all geographic regions of the country. Overall, 28% of the external evaluators are from the Central part of the country, 21% are from the Southwest, 18% are from the Northeast, 5% are from the Northwest and 28% are from the Southeast. When examined by role, variations are found among higher education educators as team chairs which found 20% are from the Central part of the country, 20% are from the Southwest, 30% are from the Northeast, and 30% are from the Southeast. Of the mortuary science educators 33% are from the Central part of the country, 28% from the Southwest, 11% from the Northeast; 6% from the Northwest, and 22% from the Southeast. Mortuary science practitioners also differ in their geographical roots; 27% are from the Central part of the country; 9% from the Southwest, 18% from the Northeast, 9% from the Northwest, and 37% from the Southeast. Figure 4 illustrates diversity of locations for the team members; most notable is the indication that there is very little representation within all team roles from the Northwest, with no higher education educators as team chairs representing this geographical area.

To further explicate the geographic representation, presented in Table 6 are the demographics of geographic location for the team members, number of mortuary schools by location and number of funeral homes by location. The table indicates that the majority of mortuary science educators (33%), mortuary schools (53%), and funeral homes (42%) are located in the Central part of the United States. It is notable that the second highest number of funeral homes (22%) and mortuary schools (20%) are from the Northeast with the highest number of higher education educators as team chairs (30%) from this area.
There is a much lower percentage of mortuary science educators (11%) and practitioners (18%) indicating a lack in those site visit team roles considering the number of schools and funeral homes in the Northeast. In addition, variation can be noted for the Southwest with 21% of the membership but only 7% of the schools. Lack of membership from the Northwest (5%) while limited does not appear to be as critical when compared with the percent of schools (2%) and number of funeral homes (4%).

Table 6  
*Geographic Location for Team Member Roles, Mortuary Schools & Funeral Homes: Percent by Placement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
<th>Total N=39 100%</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator N=10 26%</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator N=18 46%</th>
<th>Practitioner N=11 28%</th>
<th>Number of Mortuary Schools N=55 100%</th>
<th>Number of Funeral Homes N=654,980 100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Team members were asked their highest level of education attained. Overall team members reported 3% high school diplomas, 5% Associate degrees, 13% Bachelor’s degrees, 56% Master’s degrees, and 23% Doctorates. Of the higher education educators, 40% had Master’s degrees, and 60% had Doctorates. Mortuary science educators’ levels of education were 6% Bachelor’s degrees, 88% Master’s degrees, and 6% Doctorates.
Practitioners are the most diversified in their education level. Within the practitioners, 9% hold high school diplomas, 18% Associate degrees, 37% Bachelor’s, 18% Master’s and 18% Doctorates. Figure 5 illustrates the various degrees for each team role. It can be assumed that practitioners, who indicated their highest degree was high school, were diploma graduates from a mortuary school. There are very few of these because the minimum standard for all mortuary science practitioners is now an associate’s degree. When cross-checked with age, it was noted that the representatives that hold masters and doctorates are in the 51-60 age category (9%) and 61-70 age category (36%) and usually fill in the role of practitioner but may also have filled the role of mortuary science educator on some site visits.

Section 2: Participation Factors of the PRS

The PRS is a 30 item scale that is used for assessment in this study; it consists of 6 key constructs, (collegial learning and interaction, professional development and improvement, maintain professional role and abilities, professional commitment, improve professional service and personal benefit and professional capacity). Summarized in Table 7 are the constructs by team member role, (i.e. higher education educator as team chair, mortuary science educator and mortuary science practitioner) and overall mean and standard deviation for each of the six participation reasons. In tables 8–13 are breakdowns of each of the 6 constructs by the individual items for each role, as well as their overall responses. Figure 5 provides a summary of each roles reason for participation.

Research question 2: What are the major reasons reported by external evaluators for involvement in the accreditation of mortuary science programs and do these reasons vary
by professional role within the external evaluation team (i.e. higher education educator, mortuary science practitioner or mortuary science educator)?

The construct of collegial learning and interaction was of greatest overall importance to the respondents with an average mean of 5.80 on a scale from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important) as referred to in Table 7. This construct contained items that reflected learning from the interaction with other professionals, mutually exchange of thoughts with professional colleagues, being challenged by the thinking of my professional colleagues, and relating my ideas to those of my professional peers. When queried in the telephone

### Table 7

*Reasons for Participation by Accreditation Role; Self-reported Ratings of Key Participation Factors by Team Roles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collegial Learning and Interaction</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$ = 5.80, sd=1.24</td>
<td>5.86, 0.92</td>
<td>5.82, 1.42</td>
<td>5.70, 1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development and Improvement</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$ = 5.70, sd=1.36</td>
<td>5.70, 1.37</td>
<td>5.88, 1.30</td>
<td>5.42, 1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain Professional Role and Abilities</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$ = 5.45, sd=1.53</td>
<td>5.88, 1.40</td>
<td>5.34, 1.61</td>
<td>5.28, 1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Commitment</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$ = 5.44, sd=0.81</td>
<td>5.53, 1.70</td>
<td>5.22, 1.74</td>
<td>5.73, 1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Professional Service</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$ = 5.11, sd=1.83</td>
<td>4.58, 1.85</td>
<td>6.03, 1.16</td>
<td>3.98, 1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Benefit and Professional Capacity</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$ = 3.15, sd=1.59</td>
<td>2.57, 1.80</td>
<td>3.54, 1.99</td>
<td>3.03, 1.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews, responses from all team members supported collegial learning and interaction as well as direct professional benefits as reasons for being part of team visits. For example, a higher education educator reported, “I feel great being involved with professionals from all parts of the country and exchanging ideas” while a mortuary science educator commented, “I really enjoy the learning and interaction that I have on the visits with my fellow educators. It is great to share the many issues that all of us as school members must deal with, and to get ideas on how to handle a situation better.” Practitioners also viewed interactivity and learning with fellow professionals as important with one noting, “it is good to meet other funeral directors around the country and learn how they do things in their businesses.”

As noted in chapter 3, the construct for collegial learning and interaction consisted of four participation items. The results of these individual items are found in Table 8. This construct contained the item that was ranked first in overall importance across the three combined groups: to learn from the interaction with other professionals (with an average mean of 6.14 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important)). Support for this was found when team members were queried during telephone interviews. All agreed there were valuable insights to be gained by being part of a team. A mortuary science educator stated, “I participate because I learn so very much from my counterparts in education;” while another stated, “how this is one of the most important reasons that I prefer to go on the team visits because I learn what is expected at team visits from the programs, so I am aware of how things should be at my program” and from another, “when my time for accreditation arrives, I am already full of insights as to what would be the key components of the standards; how they would be addressed; whether they were
acceptable; and what would make them non-acceptable to a visiting teams.” One practitioner disclosed, “my primary reason for participating is getting to see other programs and encountering other practitioners in the field who are working for their mortuary science academic program,” while another said, “that is a great learning experience that I have received on the site visits and I enjoy learning from other programs what is expected of their practitioners that act as embalming lab preceptors.”

Table 8

Individual Team Role Response for Collegial Learning and Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Factors</th>
<th>Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Total (n=39)</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator (n=10)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator (n=18)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner (n=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To learn from the interaction with other professionals</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 6.14 )</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sd = 0.86</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To mutually exchange thoughts with professional colleagues</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 5.92 )</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sd = 1.13</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be challenged by the thinking of my professional colleagues</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 5.87 )</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sd = 1.38</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To relate my ideas to those of my professional peers</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 5.26 )</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sd = 1.59</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some slight variation in ratings of importance were found between groups for the mortuary science educators had a mean of 6.12 but the practitioners had a higher mean of
6.36 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). As noted above, for mortuary science educators, “the interaction during the visits with my fellow academic colleagues gives me many new ideas and inspirations to go back and better my own program.” Similarly for practitioners, “the best part of being on the site team is there are always learning, learning, and learning for all of us as visitors.” The higher education educators as team chairs also ranked this reason to be important but have a lower mean of 5.89. A higher education educator team chair stated for example, “I am a retired academic administrator and I have found that being challenged by working with my team colleagues and with program administrators is refreshing and keeps me current in my work.” Higher education educators as team chairs ranked the item to be challenged by the thinking of my professional colleagues liked the idea of being active the highest; they appreciated the valuable insights they could offer to the team and to the program being examined. Roe example during telephone interview, a team chair stated, “how satisfying it is to interact and be challenged by the thinking of my professional colleagues because it is an important learning experience for everyone involved because of the diversity and value of everyone’s different inputs.” All the various team groups, in general found the item to relate my ideas to those of my professional peers as being the least important on this scale with an overall mean of 5.26 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important), (higher education educator mean of 5.56; the mortuary science educator mean of 5.28 and the practitioner mean of 5.00.

The construct representing professional development and improvement was ranked second highest in importance consisting of ten statements; this scale had an overall mean of 5.70 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). The majority of items
associated with this construct were related to improving leadership skills and knowledge related to professional skills and quality in professional service. This ranking was supported during telephone interviews, when all respondents from the three team roles made comments related to its importance. Across the roles mortuary science educators had the highest ranking with a mean of 5.88. Sample mortuary science educators stated, “it is very important for us to go on these visits because we can show that we are capable of more than just teaching but in fact are true professionals” while a higher education educator noted, “that as being a major player in higher education I find the site visits to various schools to be a great resource for keeping in tune my professional skills” and practitioners added that, “participating in site visit teams really helps me become even better at what I do within my own funeral home.” This is also illustrated in Figure 5.
When individual items in the second construct are examined (see Table 9) the individual item *to help keep me abreast of new developments in my field* was the overall highest cross role choice of team members with an average mean of 6.03 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). Variations were found, however across roles, specifically the item *to develop new professional knowledge and skills* was the highest choice of the higher education educator team chair with a mean of 6.44 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). The item *to help me be more productive in my professional life* was the highest choice for the mortuary science educator with a mean of 6.22 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). Practitioners however, ranked *to sharpen my perspective of my professional role or practice* as their primary item of choice with a mean of 6.00 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important).

The individual item that rated lowest among the higher education educators and mortuary science educators was *to help me develop leadership capabilities for my profession*. Among the higher education educators as team chairs it had a mean of 4.67; with mortuary science educators a mean of 5.50. Practitioners also rated this item as low with a mean of 4.82, all on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important) but also rated *to develop the proficiencies necessary to maintain quality performance* as equally low with a mean of 4.82. The individual responses are seen in Table 9.

The telephone interviews support professional development findings. One higher education educator as team chair stated during the telephone interviews, “*it is so important for me to develop new professional knowledge about the field of mortuary science.*”
Table 9

*Individual Team Role Responses for Professional Development and Improvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Factors</th>
<th>Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Total (N=39)</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator (n=10)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator (n=18)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner (n=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To help keep me abreast of new developments in my field</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 6.03, sd=1.08</td>
<td>6.22, 0.83, 6.11, 1.02, 5.73</td>
<td>6.11, 1.02, 5.73</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help me be more productive in my professional life</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 6.00, sd=1.12</td>
<td>5.89, 1.54, 6.22, 1.11, 1.01</td>
<td>6.22, 1.11, 5.73</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop new professional knowledge and skills</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 6.00, sd=0.96</td>
<td>6.44, 0.88, 6.00, 0.97, 0.92</td>
<td>6.00, 0.97, 5.73</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To assess the direction in which my profession is going</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.82, sd=1.23</td>
<td>5.80, 1.48, 5.83, 1.15, 1.25</td>
<td>5.83, 1.15, 5.73</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sharpen my perspective of my professional role or practice</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.79, sd=1.34</td>
<td>5.60, 1.78, 5.76, 1.39, 0.78</td>
<td>5.89, 1.78, 5.89, 1.25</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help me be more competent in my current work</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.71, sd=1.52</td>
<td>5.89, 1.76, 5.83, 1.47, 1.50</td>
<td>5.89, 1.47, 5.89</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maintain the quality of my professional service</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.51, sd=1.64</td>
<td>5.60, 1.84, 5.72, 1.57, 1.64</td>
<td>5.89, 1.84, 5.89</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop the proficiencies necessary to maintain quality performance</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.51, sd=1.41</td>
<td>5.60, 1.78, 5.89, 1.13, 1.33</td>
<td>5.89, 1.78, 5.89</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help me develop leadership capabilities for my profession</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.11, sd=1.71</td>
<td>4.67, 2.12, 5.50, 1.72, 4.82</td>
<td>4.67, 2.12, 5.50</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because none of the higher education educators are allowed to take on that role as chair if they have any connection to mortuary science education or practice, they find it an important learning experience about a field of which they know little. Mortuary science educators and practitioners, on the other hand, want to learn more about a field to which they already have a deep commitment. A mortuary science educator during the telephone interview indicated, “my overall choice of being more productive in my professional life is key because for me it is all about the students and my professional life revolves around the students.” A practitioner during interview stated, “how important it is for me to sharpen my professional role or practice. It is sometimes eye opening how different things are done in different parts of the country. The visit often gives me fresh ideas.”

Maintaining professional role and abilities was ranked third in importance with an average mean of 5.45 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). It consists of two items that are associated with current abilities and professional identity. This construct was rated the highest for the higher education educators with a mean of 5.88 but lower for the mortuary science educators with a mean of 5.34 and 5.28 for the mortuary science practitioners. When interviewed, a higher education educator stated, “as a retired academic administrator, this is a nice way to maintain my skills after retirement and still be of service to the academic community.” This is illustrated in Figure 5 and Table 7.

When individual items within the construct are examined, (see Table 10), there are 2 participation items. Team members overall reported ‘to maintain my current abilities’ as the most important item for maintaining professional role and abilities with an average mean of 5.51 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). When
examined by role, two groups of team members’ responses favored this item as most
important with this area, with the higher education educators having a mean of 6.20 and the
mortuary science educators with a mean of 5.56 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important)
to 7 (very important). Practitioners, however, favored the item “to maintain my identity
with my profession” as being more important with a mean of 5.73 on a scale ranging from
1 (not important) to 7 (very important). It should be noted that there are variations in
internal role ranking within these items as noted by increasing large standard deviations.
Telephone interviews supported the findings in Table 10. Higher education educators and
mortuary science educators very much want to keep their abilities consistently current in
order to maintain their professional status. One mortuary science educator when queried as
to importance in this area said “I want to show the administrations of my program where I
came from, that I am active in the field and that this warranted professional advancement
for me through the academic ranks at my institutions.”

Table 10

<p>| Individual Team Role Response for Maintaining Professional Role and Abilities |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Factors</th>
<th>Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Total (n=39)</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator (n=10)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator (n=18)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner (n=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To maintain my current abilities</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.51 sd= 1.52</td>
<td>6.20 0.79</td>
<td>5.56 1.72</td>
<td>4.82 1.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maintain my identity with my profession</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.39 sd= 1.53</td>
<td>5.56 2.01</td>
<td>5.11 1.49</td>
<td>5.73 1.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practitioners however really wanted to be identified with their profession as funeral directors actively working in the field. During the telephone interviews they supported this as most important reason; for instance, a practitioner stated, “having recognition among my colleagues in the funeral business and making those types of business connections is a key component to continual advancement as a professional.”

Professional commitment was technically the fourth construct in overall ranking across groups but only by a small amount. This construct reflected professional image, responsibilities and improving professional service to the public; the average mean was 5.44 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important) only .01 lower than maintaining professional roles and abilities. Variations were found by role. The practitioner noted this to be the most important reason for participation with their highest average mean of 5.73, whereas the higher education educator and the mortuary science educator had lower ratings (higher education educator the average mean was 5.53 which was a fourth ranking and the mortuary science educator had an average mean of 5.22, also fourth ranked). In telephone interviews, one practitioner indicated, “I feel that I have a professional commitment to enhance my profession by ensuring that schools are striving for academic excellence.”

The results of the four items contributing to the construct are illustrated in Table 11. The team, in general, chose the item ‘to review my commitment to my profession’ as a key reason with a mean of 5.66 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). The mortuary science educators agreed with this as their key reason under commitment with a mean of 5.44 as did the higher education educators. The practitioners, however,
chose the next item to reflect on the value of my professional responsibilities as the most important item under commitment with a mean of 5.82. To review my commitment to my profession ranked second with an average mean of 5.73 for the practitioners. Variations were found for the item ranked as least important. The item chosen as lowest in importance under professional commitment for mortuary science educators was to enhance the image of my profession with a mean of 4.83. The practitioners chose the item to improve my professional service to the public as their least important item with a mean of 5.64. Higher education educators ranked both items at a mean of 5.30.

Telephone interviews confirmed these data for team role members, for the higher education educators and mortuary science educators. Higher education educators as team chairs stated during telephone interview, “how important it was for me to renew my commitments as a former leader and administrator,” and “I really want to be a part of helping schools and programs are successful”. Another higher education educator stated, “I feel that previous experiences as an administrator enabled me to give extensive support to help programs understand and meet the standards.”

Mortuary science educators were divided in their comments. During telephone interviews, mortuary science educators found both their professional and teaching roles to be significant noting there to be overlap between the two. One mortuary science educator indicated, “I am often tossed between my commitments as an educator and what I consider to be my professional responsibilities.”
Table 11

*Individual Team Role Responses for Professional Commitment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Factors</th>
<th>Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Total (n=39)</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator (n=10)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator (n=18)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner (n=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To review my commitment to my profession</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.66, sd= 1.56</td>
<td>6.00, 0.87</td>
<td>5.44, 2.04</td>
<td>5.73, 1.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reflect on the value of my professional responsibilities</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.56, sd= 1.48</td>
<td>5.50, 1.84</td>
<td>5.44, 1.62</td>
<td>5.82, 0.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my professional service to the public</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.33, sd= 1.63</td>
<td>5.30, 1.95</td>
<td>5.17, 1.54</td>
<td>5.64, 1.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enhance the image of my profession</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$= 5.21, sd= 1.70</td>
<td>5.30, 2.16</td>
<td>4.83, 1.76</td>
<td>5.73, 1.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The practitioners also noted value related to personal professional responsibilities as well as to the mortuary science profession. For example, one practitioner noted, *"I feel I can have a real impact in the growth of my future by being invested in the schools and students, "*where as another practitioner was quoted as saying, *"I believe I am enhancing my profession by helping schools to turn out the best students for future funeral directors."*

Improving professional service was the fifth construct; it consisted of items directly related to supporting the needs and expectations of students. The average mean for this construct was 5.11 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). The
mortuary science educators found this construct to be the most important reason for participation with an average mean of 6.03, highest rank for their role whereas the higher education educator as team chair ranked it 5\textsuperscript{th} of 6 with an average mean of 4.58 and practitioners rated it with an average mean of 3.98. This choice as a primary reason for participation for mortuary science educators was supported by phone interviews. One mortuary science educator summarized the concept noting that “I want to ensure other schools are abiding by the standards and supporting all student needs.” Another mortuary science educator stated that “my students are the real reason I teach and meeting their needs is my first priority.”

Four individual items, found in Table 12, contributed to this construct. The order of rankings for these items is the same across groups; however, the numerous weight attached to each via the group mean differs markedly. Overall, the team chose to help me increase the likelihood that students are better served was the most important reason associated with improving professional service with an average mean of 6.13 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). All team groups selected this as their major reason with the higher education educators having a mean of 6.30; the mortuary science educators having a mean of 6.39 and the practitioners having a mean of 5.55. When queried in telephone interviews about the most helpful things they learned from being team participants, one mortuary science educator stated, “I learned things from visiting other programs that I could take back to my school and utilize to help my students,” while another mortuary science educator stated, “it really helped me to see that there is more than one way to teach things to students to facilitate their learning.”
Table 12

*Individual Team Role Responses for Improving Professional Service*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Factors</th>
<th>Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Total (n=39)</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator (n=10)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator (n=18)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner (n=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To help me increase the likelihood that students are better served</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 6.13 )</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sd = 1.20</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enable me to better meet student expectations</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 5.18 )</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sd = 1.80</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To accommodate more effectively to the needs of my student</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 4.92 )</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sd = 2.11</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase my proficiency with students</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 4.22 )</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sd = 2.21</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A practitioner stated, “*being a team member really reinforced that we give a lot to students and in the field we expect a lot in return from them.*”

The item chosen as the least important reason under improving professional service was *to increase my proficiency with students*. Overall this item in general had an average mean of 4.22. Individually, the higher education educator for this item had a mean of 3.00; mortuary science educators a mean of 5.56 and the practitioners a mean of 2.80.

The construct of personal benefit and professional capacity associated with increased job security, financial gain and professional advancement was ranked as the least important reason for participation overall and by all three groups. This construct had an
average mean of 3.15 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important), with higher education educators overall mean of 2.57, mortuary science educators overall mean of 3.54 and practitioners an overall mean of 3.03 (see Table 7). Of the six items (see Table 13) within this construct increasing the likelihood of personal financial gain was the item found to be the least important reason of all 30 items on the PRS with average mean of 2.00 and a standard deviation of 1.61. In the telephone interview, a higher education educator stated, “I am doing this for professional reasons and in no way for any monetary compensation.” One mortuary science educator pointed out in the telephone interview, “financial gain is not the object for my going on these visits, the most important thing to me is the interaction between my colleagues and me, sharing the learning of how they do things differently in their institutions that I might benefit from and do in my institution.” While a practitioner stated, “money was not the object of my participation but meeting other colleagues and seeing other school programs was most important to me.”

Examination of the other items, however, indicates that there were some personal reasons for participation. Higher education educators and mortuary science educators chose the item to increase the likelihood of professional advancement as the most important personal gain (higher education educators average mean was 3.56; mortuary science educators average mean was 4.28).

Practitioners, however, chose to consider limitations of my role as a professional with a mean of 4.27 as the most important reason. Telephone interviews with team members indicated their support for these rankings. A higher education educator stated in
the interview that “I didn’t care about any financial gain but instead really wanted to
enhance my professional roles by participation in the site visits.” One of the mortuary

Table 13

*Individual Team Role Responses for Personal Benefit and Professional Capacity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Factors</th>
<th>Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Total  (n=39)</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator  (n=10)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator (n=18)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner (n=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To increase the likelihood of professional advancement</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 4.05 )</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( sd = 2.04 )</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To consider the limitations of my role as a professional</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 3.73 )</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( sd = 2.04 )</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To consider changing the emphasis of my present professional responsibilities</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 3.71 )</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( sd = 1.94 )</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the likelihood of benefits for family/friends</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 2.79 )</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( sd = 1.79 )</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enhance my security in my present position</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 2.63 )</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( sd = 1.95 )</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the likelihood of personal financial gain</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 2.00 )</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( sd = 1.61 )</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

science educators indicated “I want to increase my professional advancement and often my institutions required that I be part of teams as a basis for professional growth within my
institutions.” While a practitioner stated, “this was a way to get insights from other practitioners to enhance my personal gain as a professional and business person.”

Section 3: Importance of Site Team Information Sources and Variation by Role

Research Question 3: What do external evaluators perceive as important information sources for the site team process and do these perceptions differ by role within the evaluation team?

The second section of the survey asked team members to consider and weigh in terms of importance, the array of evaluation evidence available during a site visit. These indicators include archival data summaries, on site data collection, as well as specifically prepared summary specific items reflecting the work by Bauer (1996) and are additive to the accreditation literature. As in the previous section, a summary of the responses are presented overall and by group role (see Table 14 and Figure 6).

Examination of Table 14 indicates that the onsite documents were the most important information with an overall mean of 6.76 on a scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). These documents could include financial statements of the program, students end of course surveys, graduate surveys, lab reports of current students, employer surveys, library holdings specific to the department, student complaints against college or program and faculty transcripts.

The major focus for the mortuary science educator is the immediate program information including the self-study with a mean of 6.67; on-site documents with a mean of 6.89 and interviews with on site personnel with a mean of 6.67. The mortuary science
Educator has much to be gained as an educator by having an awareness of other schools’ mortuary science program.

Table 14

*Importance of Site Visit Information by Team Role*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Visit Information Source</th>
<th>Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Total (n=39)</th>
<th>Team Chair (n=10)</th>
<th>Educator (n=18)</th>
<th>Practitioner (n=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-site documents</td>
<td>$\bar{x} =$ 6.76, sd=0.43</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with site personnel</td>
<td>$\bar{x} =$ 6.71, sd=0.52</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-study report</td>
<td>$\bar{x} =$ 6.66, sd=0.58</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions with site team members</td>
<td>$\bar{x} =$ 6.45, sd=0.83</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application information</td>
<td>$\bar{x} =$ 4.53, sd=1.43</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The major focus for the practitioner is the interviews because that is a time for collaboration between them and fellow practitioners as well as college personnel. During telephone interviews a practitioner indicated “*personal interviews on site were for me the true test as to whether the documentation I received via self-study or on-site really contained accurate information.*” Another practitioner can be quoted as stating, “*the site visit is a time for making connections for me and for establishing professional*
relationships as well as monitoring how the future generations of funeral service practitioners are being educated.” The focus for the higher education educator is every area because they must write the final report with suggestions from the other team members. They found the application information the least important because it is not used in writing the report. In phone interviews all higher education educators were reluctant to pinpoint any single area as being the least important. One higher education educator stated, “I feel that all areas are significant when determining if a program or school is meeting the standards.” While another higher education educator stated, “I am responsible for all the details of the final report although I receive a great deal of support in writing it with
the assistance of the mortuary science educator and practitioner.” The higher education educator must present the final report to the program or school during the exit interview and the team chair also must present it to the Accreditation Committee of the American Board of Funeral Service Education, which is the national accreditation agency for mortuary science programs.

When higher education educators were queried in telephone interviews about how they would rank the different components, all ranked the self-study as their most important source of information for the site visit. “The self-study document is a key component that I use to plan all assignments for the team,” one higher education educator as team chair stated. Another higher education educator stated, “the other sources we use during the accreditation process fall into play more like resources for the team in our evaluation.” It was further emphasized by another higher education educator that “the application information was the least important source of information, because it is information basic as to who, what, where and when.”

Mortuary science educators in their telephone interviews when queried as to the most important source for site visit information indicated the self-study. The primary reason for its importance, one mortuary science educator stated, “is that all the information about the standards was contained in the self-study, how a program met those standards, any self-noted deficiencies and discussion as to how the program perceived to alleviate the deficiencies and completely meet the standard.” Two mortuary science educators further went on to state, “how important it is for us to see how other programs and schools conduct themselves and alleviate their issues because as an individual from a program or
school I might be facing similar issues and the experience is sometimes an eye opening to ways to correct a deficiency with a particular standard.”

The practitioners also ranked the self-study as the most important when they were queried in telephone interviews as to what they considered the most important source of information for the site-visit. One practitioner stated, “that the reason it is most important to me is that it is a complete source of information that allowed me to prepare myself for the site visit to a new school and different state.”

All team members were queried via telephone interview as to what was the least important source of information for them. The higher education educators and mortuary science educators chose the application as the least important but the practitioners chose their discussions with site team members to be the least important. When queried as to why they felt that way, one practitioner was quoted as saying, “I didn’t really need to get that much input from other team members on the areas that I was responsible for.” Another practitioner stated, “I usually feel very comfortable writing up my areas of the report.”

Section 4: Relationship between Roles and Self-Study Information

In section 4 the relationship between roles and self-study information was examined. Table 15 examined the relationship of the importance of self-study information by team roles. Overall, team members rated the most important part of the self-study information as program evaluation activities with an average mean of 6.45. In terms of importance this is not surprising as the most stressed standard pertains to program evaluation, how the program does it and what do they do with the information once they receive it. Successful completion of program evaluation activities is a key to the
reaccreditation of programs in mortuary science. It has been an issue, in recent years, with programs either being placed on probation or losing accreditation because of inadequate comprehensive program evaluation.

The higher education educators stressed two areas of key importance in the self-study and that was program evaluation with a mean of 6.70 and equally important was curriculum issues with a mean of 6.70. This was supported in telephone interviews and follow up emails with higher education educators as team chairs. When higher education educators team chairs were queried as to what area they considered most important in the self study, one higher education educator stated, “program evaluation and curriculum.” Two higher education educators stated that, “one area was equally as important as the other because one impacted the other at the school/program level.” The higher education educators all concurred through interview and email that program evaluation was a key standard where in recent years many schools had issues, which at times could be traced back to some curriculum issues.

The mortuary science educators stressed the major importance of curriculum issues with a mean of 6.44). The mortuary science educator would, on their own campus, be very intimately involved in curriculum issues. For the mortuary science educator this is a way for collaboration with colleagues and to see how and what is being done differently than on their campus. In phone interviews, when asked about what they considered to be most important, one mortuary science educator was quoted as stating, “curriculum.” Another mortuary science educator stated that, “without a strong curriculum, the program set themselves up for failure in all the other standards that are addressed in the self-study.”
Table 15

*Importance of Self-Study Information by Team Member Role*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-study report components</th>
<th>Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Total (n=39)</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator (n=10)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator (n=18)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner (n=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program evaluation activities</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 6.45 )  ( sd = 0.69 )</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty issues</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 6.37 )  ( sd = 0.82 )</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum issues</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 6.34 )  ( sd = 1.24 )</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student issues</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 6.26 )  ( sd = 0.89 )</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program goals and achievement</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 6.21 )  ( sd = 1.23 )</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 6.00 )  ( sd = 1.12 )</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program organization and administration</td>
<td>( \bar{x} = 5.95 )  ( sd = 1.18 )</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Practitioners identified program goals and achievement as the key area of the self-study for them with a mean of 6.60. Practitioners especially examine the program goals and achievement because the community outside the school/program including area mortuary science practitioners wants to be proud of their academic programs. The graduates from the program are working in these local communities so there is reputation at
stake as well. Practitioners on the team know the importance of reputation and maintaining a program that rates itself as having a goal that includes turning out exemplary professionals. In telephone interviews one of the practitioners stated, “the importance of program achievement is a key entity to the community and to those of us that are area practitioners.”

In telephone interviews and via email follow-up higher education educators as team chair supported curriculum as the most important area in the self-study, stating that, “although all areas are important, curriculum was significant as a key component because what was taught was a key standard of the American Board Accreditation Standards due to the specificity of courses that are to be standard with curriculum.” Another higher education educator stated, “resources are the least important in the self-study because an institution usually had appropriate resources or they would not have reached the accreditation stage.”

A mortuary science educator stated, “the self-study is a key source of information because it holds the information for all areas of the program/department and the resources that are available for the program/department throughout the college” when queried through telephone interviews and email follow-up. Another mortuary science educator indicated that “it was hard to pick out one area that was most important.” This relates to the fact that the information is the same information that they as a program/school have to have available for their program when a site team comes to visit and accredit them. Another mortuary science educator indicated in telephone interview that “curriculum is always a key factor” while another mortuary science educator stated, “everything revolves
around curriculum as the main focus because not only is it one of the standards but it is very specific as to what you are supposed to be teaching the students, if you are not meeting that standard then students won’t be successful in their career and you will be in violation of your accreditation.”

Practitioners found once again the program goals and achievements to be the key component of the self-study with a mean of 4.30 and found resources to be least important with a mean of 2.60 based on a scale of 1 being most important and 6 being least important. When queried though telephone interviews, one practitioner supported the findings of this table and is quoted as saying that “I also considered resources to be the least important component of the self-study because if a program didn’t have resources we would not be doing a site visit.” Another practitioner stated that “once again program goals and achievements were key components that look for as a community stakeholder I am looking for a return for my investment in the school or program.”

Section 5: Training and Support of External Evaluation Team Members

Research Question 4: What type of training and support do mortuary science external evaluators receive?

Table 16 reviews the self-reported training and support received by team members. Overall from telephone interviews the majority of training for all team members was shadowing mentors during team visit. Initially all team members are given the Accreditation Manual. A typical response by all team members was that he/she “all learned by being given the American Board of Funeral Service Education Accreditation Manual to review before I went on a site visit.” Higher education educators in telephone
interview stated that “following receiving the manual that I met for one day with an established team chair and went over the process and the standards and then I went with the same team chair on a site visit while being mentored by the team chair. After that I was allowed to go out on site visits by myself. I received all the support I needed from the Executive Office of the American Board.”

Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training &amp; Support Methods</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator (n=4)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator (n=4)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner (n=4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Manual</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Half-&gt;Full Day Training Course</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Yes prior to 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Two Hour Self-Study Workshop Post 2005</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Yes after 2005</td>
<td>Yes after 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One day of meeting with experienced team chair</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Shadowing</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo Visits with Team</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABFSE Executive Director Phone Support</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Available but don’t use</td>
<td>Available but don’t use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mortuary science educators when questioned in telephone interviews indicated that the training they received was different, depending on when they started as a team member. The mortuary science educators (50%), who started as site visitors prior to 2005, received
training by mentoring from the higher education educator as team chair during an actual site visit. However for the remaining 50%, mortuary science educators who joined after 2005 a difference were found. At that time, a 2 hour formal self-study workshop was held twice a year in which a detailed discussion of the standards in the manual is reviewed. Following this training individual mortuary science educators are eligible to go on site visits. If there were further questions it was reported that “I would seek the support information directly from the team chair and not the main office.”

Those practitioners who had the most experience (50%) indicated that they had received a formal half to full day training course. However when queried the American Board of Funeral Service Education, the director stated that “I am unaware of when in the past there had ever been formal half to full day training for practitioners. The other 50% of practitioners (those with less experience) indicated they only received training through going on a site visit and being mentored as they went along by the higher education educator, which they felt was adequate. Any support they needed was received from the higher education educator as team chair.

Summary

The research for this study was conducted using the PRS. Its use in the mortuary science field was reconfirmed in this study and validated by three academic administrators with backgrounds of participation in professional accreditations.

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the reasons why external evaluators participate in mortuary science accreditation and if selected characteristics of the external evaluators are related to their reasons for participating as well as if the
participants’ perceptions of different sources of information provided to them for assessment are related to their reasons for participating in mortuary science program accreditation.

Various tables have been utilized to examine relationships between the variables noting relationships. It is evident from the data that external evaluators are very much a part of the mortuary science accreditation process and the team roles play a significant part in what team members consider to be important information both for personal and professional gain.
Chapter Five

Summary of Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and discusses its implications. Using a mixed methodology design, the investigator addressed key descriptive questions: 1) who are the external evaluators that constitute mortuary science accreditation site visit teams? 2) what are the major reasons reported by external evaluators for involvement in the accreditation of mortuary science programs and do these reasons vary by professional role within the external evaluation team (i.e. higher education educator, mortuary science practitioner or mortuary science educator)? 3) what do external evaluators perceive as important information sources for the site team process and do these perceptions differ by role within the evaluation team? and 4) what type of training and support do external evaluators that are involved in mortuary science accreditation report that they have received?

Due to the limited population, the responding sample for the survey consisted of all 100% of the 39 external evaluators (excepting the researcher) who participated in accreditation site visits during the time period of 1999 to 2007. Respondents represented all three roles (mortuary science practitioner, mortuary science educator and higher education educator). Follow up telephone interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of 12 individuals (4 from each team role). A second follow up was conducted via telephone interviews with a purposeful sample of 6 individuals (2 from each team role) and
emails with a purposeful sample of 20 individuals (4 higher education educators, 11 mortuary science educators, and 5 mortuary science practitioners.

**Discussions**

**Research Question 1**

The first research question asked who the evaluators were that made up site visit teams. Responses showed that, overall, mortuary science external evaluators were mostly white males, in the 61-70 age range, coming primarily from the Southeast and Central parts of the country with varying degrees of education. When examined by roles, the higher education educators were primarily white males, 61-70 years old, geographically from the Southeast and Northeast, with doctorates. The mortuary science educators were primarily white males, age group 51-60, geographically from the Central part of the country, with master’s degrees. The practitioners were primarily white males, age group 61-70, geographically from the Southeast, with bachelor’s degrees.

Analysis of geographical data indicates possible areas of disparity between team members and educational facilities. The geographical data in Table 6 and Table 17 shows that there are 55 mortuary science schools or programs in the United States with 53% of the schools which serve 49% of the mortuary science students located in the Central portion of the United States. When compared with statistics from the National Census Bureau, 42% of the funeral homes serving 40% of the population of this country are located in the Central region of the United States. Utilizing these data for comparative purposes to examine the geographical data for the team roles, it can be seen that only 33% of mortuary science
educators participating in site team visits are from the Central region as are 20% of higher education educators and 27% of practitioners.

The Southeast area, however, appears to be over represented. The geographic data indicates that 18% of the funeral homes serving 18% of the population in the U.S. are located in the Southeast region of the country. The highest percentage of practitioners (37%) that participate as members on the site visit teams are from the Southeast region. The Southeast area however contains 28% of all team members (30% of higher education educators and 28% of mortuary science educators and 37% of mortuary science practitioners). It is possible that the cultural and social values dominant within a site visitor’s personal experience and or regional reference may influence their interpretation and use of academic information.

Table 17
Percentage comparison of geographic regions by team members by schools by students by funeral homes by population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions of the United States</th>
<th>Team Members N=39</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Schools N=55</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Students N=2857</th>
<th>Funeral Homes N=6,541,980</th>
<th>Population N=282,777,375*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*based on 2007 U.S. Census
Finally, geographical data indicates that 2% of the mortuary science schools serving 1% of the mortuary science students and 4% of the funeral homes serving 5% of the United States population are located in the Northwest. There are no higher education educators serving as team chairs from this area of the country indicating potential limitation in team role representation. Overall it appears there is not sufficient geographical diversity across team roles to ensure representation of the country’s schools and funeral home stakeholders.

**Research Question 2.**

The second question examined the major reasons reported by external evaluators for involvement in the accreditation of mortuary science programs and whether these reasons varied by professional role within the external evaluation team (i.e. higher education educator team chair, mortuary science practitioner or mortuary science educator)? The Participation Reasons Scale was used to assess this variable. The PRS has strong external validity as an assessment tool for individuals’ reasons for participation in disciplines and activities related to the health care professionals (Bauer, 1996), engineering majors (Grzyb, 1997), and continuing education programs (Grotelueschen, 1985).

The current study found overall mortuary science accreditation site team members chose collegial learning and interaction to be the most important reason for their participation on site team visits. This result reflects mortuary science site team visitors responses indicating that learning was one of the main reasons they participated in site visits. Not only is there great sharing taking place of new and current information but there is also “a lot of learning from colleagues taking place” stated team members. This factor
was supported by all members queried by telephone interview as evidenced by the following statement “a chance to see how other programs operate and be able to take back information to our own programs for enrichment”. Higher education educators overall stated “how great it was to be involved with professionals from all geographic areas of the country exchanging thoughts and idea.” while mortuary science educators commented in general “how much I enjoyed the learning and interactions I have with peer educators in other programs”. Similarly, practitioners stated “how well I liked meeting other funeral directors around the country and seeing how they run their funeral businesses”.

As noted in Table 18 findings differ from those of other users. Bauer (1996) while examining health science accreditation participation found that professional development and improvement is the most important reason for participation. Similarly Grotelueschen (1985) found that professional development and improvement is the most important reasons for participation among continuing educators and business professionals as did Gryzb (1997) in research with engineers.

The current mortuary science study found professional development and improvement to be the second most important construct overall among site team members. In the current study the mortuary science educators, during telephone interviews, stated “it is very significant and important for us to go on these visits because our administration looks at it as being a way that we show our professionalism by being part of site visit accreditation teams”. Mortuary science educators further stated “that being on a site team was a great way to get promotions.” The higher education educators as team chair during telephone interview stated that “professional improvement is a key way to gain knowledge
in a field that I am totally unfamiliar with, that of mortuary science.” Practitioners in telephone interviews stated that “being a part of a mortuary science site visit team is one of the best ways to make contact with other funeral directing professionals and share business information and to grow as a professional back in my own funeral home.”

Table 18

Comparison of constructs by current study and literature studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleagial Learning and Interaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development and Improvement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain Professional Role and Abilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Commitment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Professional Service</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Benefit and Professional Capacity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* 1=most important and 6 = least important
Again, these findings are different from previous researchers. Bauer (1996) with health sciences and Grotelueschen (1985) in studying continuing education and business professionals’ indicated the second highest construct was improvement of professional services. Grzyb (1997) in studying engineers’ found the second highest construct was personal benefit and professional capacity.

The current mortuary science study found that maintaining professional role and abilities to be third most significant construct overall. Higher education educators stated that participation on mortuary science site visit teams also was important because “this is a great way for us as retired administrators to maintain our skills as professionals.” Mortuary science educators and practitioners found that this area was important but they are quoted in telephone interviews as stating that “there are more important reasons for us to participate on the site team visits.”

The third construct that Bauer (1996) in studying health sciences found to be significant was personal benefit and professional capacity. While Grotelueschen (1985) in studying continuing education and business professionals found collegial learning and interaction to be the third most significant; Grzyb (1997) in studying engineering found improving professional service to be third.

In the current mortuary science study, the fourth construct that was of key importance overall was professional commitment. The practitioners rated this reason higher than either educators or team chairs. One practitioner stated in telephone interviews that “I feel that I need to have a strong professional commitment as many of us are
stakeholders in the mortuary science schools and programs in my geographic areas and I want to ensure that our programs are on target for academic excellence.”

The fourth construct that was of key importance to Bauer (1996) with health sciences; Grzyb (1997) with engineering; and Grotelueschen (1985) with continuing education and business professionals was also professional commitment in their studies.

The fifth construct ranked in importance overall among team members was to improve professional service, however, the mortuary science educators found this to be the most important reason for participation in the site visit mortuary science accreditation teams. Mortuary science educators stated via telephone interviews that “this is my primary reason for participating because I want to ensure other schools are abiding by the standards and supporting all student needs.”

Bauer (1996) in studying health sciences found the fifth construct to be collegial learning and interaction; for Grzyb (1997) in studying engineering found maintaining professional role and abilities to be the fifth construct; and Grotelueschen (1985) studying continuing education and business professionals found maintaining professional role and abilities to be the fifth construct.

The current mortuary science study found that personal benefit and professional capacity was the least important to participants in the studies. In the current study, higher education educators as team chairs stated in telephone interviews that “I do this for professional reasons and in no way for monetary compensation.” Mortuary science educators in telephone interviews stated that “financial gain is not the object for going but instead is for peer interactions with colleagues who are facing the same issues as I am.”
Practitioners in telephone interviews stated that “meeting other professional colleagues and see how other schools are run is what is most important to me.”

The comments by the various site team members illustrate Erickson’s (1963) stage of generativity during which individuals are concerned with establishing and guiding the next generation as a key to living fully. Without being generative, individuals feel a sense of stagnation and personal impoverishment.

Bauer (1996) in studying health sciences found the least important construct to be maintaining professional role and abilities. Grzyb (1997) in studying engineers found the least important construct to be collegial learning and interaction. Grotelueschen (1985) in studying business professionals and continuing education found the least important construct to be personal benefit and professional capacity.

Overall, this study adds to the current accreditation literature (e.g. Dill, 1996; Bauer, 1996; Wadsworth, 1997; Barker & Smith, 1998; Simpson, 2004) with new information on health science professionals and mortuary science professionals specifically. The findings enhance the importance of the reason for involvement of the site team members and how the roles differ in that process. In addition the findings show how important participation is to the continued improvement of the program and procedures representative of the program. Site team members are learning through their encounters with their peers’ during the site visits; participation offers opportunities for all individuals to gain knowledge in non-traditional ways through peer encounters and hands on experiences. Future research needs to address not only the degree of difference but the “why” of difference.
Research Question 3

Research question 3 examined what external evaluators perceive as important information sources for the site team process and how these perceptions differ by role within the evaluation team. The findings are summarized in Table 19. Examination of the rankings indicates that educators reported on-site documents as the most important information source for their site team visit. This is consistent with current accreditation research. DeSilets (2007) indicated that within the nursing accreditation process onsite documents are an integral component of the site team visit and process. The site team visitors spend many hours examining on-site documents to affirm that the self-study is an accurate portrayal of the program and that there is a true picture of the program, faculty, students and institutional support. Bauer (1996) also found that information from colleagues was considered to be an important validation of information presented in the self-study.

In the current study, higher education educators as team chairs considered every area very important with the exception of the application information. Current literature (Young & Hagerty, 2007) supports this perception by the higher education educators as team chairs of examining all areas of assessment and sharing the knowledge gained through theses examinations with all stakeholders involved. In the current study when higher education educators were queried in telephone interviews, they stated that “I need to see the information in every area to be able to prepare a detailed exit report and exit interview.”
Table 19

Importance of Site Visit Information by Team Role and Ranking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Visit Information Source</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator (n=10)</th>
<th>Higher Education Educator Ranking</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator (n=18)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Educator Ranking</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner (n=11)</th>
<th>Mortuary Science Practitioner Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-site documents</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with site personnel</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-study report</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions with site team members</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application information</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some differences exist by role. The mortuary science educators chose as their main focus the onsite documents and the self-study as both being significant pieces of information. Bauer (1996) in studying health sciences indicated the importance to the site team that on-site documents provide a link to and/or validation of the information related in the self-study report. Barker & Smith (1998) indicated that for accreditation site teams, the self-study is at the heart of the accreditation process and becomes validated with the onsite documents. DeSilets (2007) indicated that the self-study demonstrates how a program complies with accreditation standards and the onsite documents clarify, amplify and verify all information in the self-study. Mortuary science educators in the current study when queried in telephone interviews stated, “the documents that we are called upon
to examine during the site visit are the very documents that we must have in place at our schools or programs when an accreditation site team comes to visit us.”

The practitioners chose, as their main item of importance, the interviews with site team personnel. This supports the accreditation literature noting the importance practitioners being stakeholders in their own geographic areas. Cousins and Earl (1992) indicate that primary participants in evaluation activities must have motivation to do so. Welsh and Metcalf (2003) indicate that involving stakeholders in the evaluation process can influence the extent to which evaluation results are used and considered relevant by all stakeholders. Blalock, Copeland and De Valenzuela (2005) indicate that involving peer stakeholders in the accreditation process can facilitate empowerment for stakeholders to take information and encourage utilization of it in their own areas. The practitioners in the current mortuary science study are quoted as stating that “we want to see the success of the mortuary science program we are evaluating because it is a reflection on the communities the program is in.”

Research Question 4

Research question 4 examines the type of training and support external evaluators involved in mortuary science accreditation report that they have received. The findings indicated that the training is limited and inconsistent (See Figure7). All team members stated they first received the ABFSE Accreditation Manual. This manual is the basis for the accreditation training as it contains all the Mortuary Science Professional Standards that govern Mortuary Science Accreditation. All three team roles differed in the second step training that they received. The higher educators, after receiving the manual had a one day
meeting with an experienced higher educator at one site visit team chair, followed by
mentor shadowing by that higher educator. Following the mentor shadowing visit they
soloed on team visits and if needed received follow up support from the ABFSE Executive
Director.

The mortuary science educators indicated that after they received the ABFSE
Accreditation Manual, they were assigned to real decision making on a site visit and were
mentored by the higher educator on their first team visit and after that on solo visits with no
mentor; if they had questions they asked the team chair.

For the mortuary science educator there were two tracts followed after they were
given the manual. Some indicated that before 2005 they did not receive formal training.
After 2005, others indicated that they went to a formal two hour self-study workshop and
then went on visits.

The mortuary science educators indicated that the ABFSE Executive Director was
supposedly available but that they rarely contacted him and instead usually contacted the
higher educator on the team for the current site visit if they needed information.

The practitioners, after receiving the ABFSE Accreditation Manual indicated that
they also had mentor shadowing on an active site visit and then went on visits without
direction. Some practitioners when queried stated that they received a formal full day
training course before 2005 although there is no documentation of this course. Other
practitioners said that after 2005 they went to the same formal two hour self-study
workshop that the other new mortuary science educators and higher educators did.
These patterns of training reflect a lack of validation of training found in other professions. Accreditation literature indicates that many organizations have formal training sessions as well as mentoring opportunities while others just mentor individuals. Gratch-Lindauer (2002) examined regional accreditation standards and found that the agencies have formal training manuals and do training workshops’ for their new site team members usually in a group with mentoring taking place on site with all new team members.

Brennan & Austin (2003) indicated in their research, that training for Business School Accreditation teams are often on an individual basis with some mentoring during visits.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education requires formal training for new members on an annual basis, for a half day or a full day before the fall board meetings. Additional training sessions may be held for board members on an as-needed basis. The American Psychological Association requires a full day of formal training for new site team visitors in conjunction with their annual meetings.

In general, the current study identified a weakness in the accreditation process that not everyone in mortuary science accreditation receives both training in a classroom and mentoring and there is not in place any mandate to keep current as a site visitor with refresher training. No one in mortuary science accreditation is charged with making sure that site team members are up to date with the standards which frequently are modified on a yearly basis. As noted by Gratch – Lindauer (2002) standards are always changing and being modified and the team visitors need to be aware of those changes.
Figure 7. Mortuary Science Accreditation Site Team Members Training
Recommendations

Recommendations for Evaluation and Accreditation Theory

Accreditation theory identifies how important it is for all stakeholders to be involved in the accreditation site team process. As this study denotes the site team members are stakeholders in their own right with self-satisfying purposes and reasons for participating. It is important to investigate the importance of the knowledge retained by the site team members. Team members indicate that their participation allows them to come away with new ideas and knowledge that they use to enhance their own programs. The question becomes, “do they really?” If mortuary science site team members do bring knowledge back to their own geographical areas, how is it disseminated to administrations, staff, faculty and even students? Are there workshops or conferences held to share new information and discuss implications to enhance their programs with new ideas? Accreditation theory and models of practice need to be expanded to include a dissemination process including the key components of that process.

Recommendations for Accreditation Practice

There is little systematic research on the influence of accreditation on programs or learning, (Volkwein, Lattuca, Harper & Domingo, 2006). This study furthered existing research on the accreditation process by expanding a specific area within the knowledge of practice for the health sciences. Very little current data exists in this area yet it is a key professional area. Professionals in mortuary science need to examine how well the accreditation works for their field.
While the findings of this study add to that limited body of research, the current study was restricted to the reasons for participation in accreditation site teams as those assessed by the PRS. There may be other factors that influence why individuals participate in mortuary science accreditation teams (e.g. site based contextual factors, evaluator demographics and training.) In particular, the study found that some of the participants had previously participated in site visits for other accreditation agencies. It is not known how important this “crossover” might be. Future research should address these validity issues.

It also is important that there be more encouragement to disseminate information gained during accreditation site visits. As shown in the current study, information gained during the site team visit process is important to all stakeholders, both those that are part of the team and those that are the stakeholders of the program. How this information transfer can be fostered and improved needs to be studied.

The study also indicates the importance of the various program evaluation activities that go into the self-study process and how important input is from all stakeholders. Again research and practice needs to address inclusion of different sources of information and how to best portray those data.

Because the accreditation process encourages collaboration between the program and the ABFSE to enhance programs for students; it is important that the site team members be utilized as first responders to encourages and help a program to improve in all areas to meet the standards. Future research and practice should address how to increase and improve this role.

Recommendations for Mortuary Science Accreditation Practice
Examination of the demographic data indicates that there needs to be future research on recruitment of external site team members in mortuary science especially on how to attract more individuals to be ABFSE site team members. There is also a distinct need to attract team members that will provide a more geographically diverse pool. The data indicates that there is a need for more women to participate as higher educator team chairs and more males to participate as mortuary science educators and practitioners. There is also a need for more ethnic diversity and younger individuals among higher educators that fill the role of team chairs.

This study also indicates that there should be an examination of the training of the mortuary science site team members to better prepare team members and make all teams equal by training. The majority of team members indicated that they don’t receive formal accreditation training. Instead they receive only one shot exposure to the standards.

During a combination of second phone interviews and emails queries, most team members continued to see no need for credible, reliable training. A higher educator team chair stated that “training given to individuals preparing to be site team visitors is adequate and that individuals can come and refresh themselves on the standards any time there is a self-study workshop.” A mortuary science educator differed in opinion stating “I think every educator and professional site visitor needs the training at least once every 5 years. The manual is in constant revision and so changes should be brought to their attention”. Another said “I think 2-hours is pushing it 4-hours would be better since there is so much detail, especially for the school undergoing the visit.” A practitioner stated
“We probably could all stand a longer training period, and figure out ways to make the site visit less intimidating for the school.”

Before this can happen, however, there needs to be presentation on the need for credible and replicable site visits. There appears to be a need for more thorough training besides the two hour accreditation manual class to the point of mandatory continuing education for all site team members. If the mortuary science accreditation board wants to consider itself as true professionals, a possible mandatory continuing education course, again possibly online, should be designed for all site team members on how to enhance their abilities as team members and keep up with all new changes in ABFSE standards. There are various ways that this could take place, possibly utilizing on-line refresher courses.

There needs to be not only training but development of a specific training feedback form that addresses site team members concerns in the development of new skills during training, or enhancing current skills including improvement of communication skills, appropriate examples of writing reports, and of situations that might be encountered during a site visit and how to handle them, and the competency of the presenter. This builds on the work of Leopold (1999) who researched site visit training and orientation with resulting data that supported training and orientation for new evaluators/accreditators.

The overall process of the site visit also should be reexamined periodically. There is a standard procedure for the accreditation site visit. The time frame of the site visit is only a three day cycle. The team arrives on a Sunday, is at the institution only for Monday and then has the exit interview Tuesday and then leaves. There should be an examination of
this short time frame and its effectiveness for both the ABFSE training and institutions. Does the team really have enough time to do a valid and replicable evaluation of the program and all its parts and whether in fact it meets the standards? This is a serious and important question that needs to be answered.

Enhancement of the learning process reaccreditation also should be considered. There is a lack of enticement for all team roles to become participants in site teams, especially in the below 50 age group. One possible suggestion is to implement a “continuing education” course or a curriculum unit on professional involvement as part of the education of students in the field that stresses the needs and opportunities to become involved in their field as future accreditation site team members. This could be supported post graduation by professional development offerings.

The mortuary science practitioner in most states is mandated to take continuing education courses. The American Board of Funeral Service Education could engage in discussions with the National Funeral Directors Association to develop a continuing education course that might be offered on a yearly basis at the National Convention.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Several areas, in addition to those discussed above pose areas for future research. Individuals are not queried as to why, based on their current occupation, it is important to them to be members of mortuary science accreditation site visit teams. Further research needs to be conducted to assess if individuals participate of political or professional reasons by their institutions in the case of mortuary science educators or the funeral homes in the case of mortuary science practitioners.
More research in the mortuary science field also needs to be conducted to ascertain what formal sources are available to site team visitors to enhance their skills as evaluators and accreditors. For example, how accessible are these sources? Who is the support person for the sources and are they valid and reliable sources of information?

Much research needs to be accomplished in the area of training the individuals to be on an ABFSE site visit team. It is important to assess if the credibility and replicability of the training provided to individuals who are already site team members, whether of not should it be formal or informal; current or future-oriented; introspective or interactive and should it be voluntary or mandatory. Also future studies should examine barriers to training, for example issues like distance to training site, money involved; and time away from jobs.

As noted earlier, it is also important to examine how information received on site visits is used either personally by the team member on site, what is brought back to their institutions for use, and what is left behind. As Grzyb, Graham, and Donaldson (1998) stated in their research, the organizational culture the individual comes from helps shape the value of its members, fostering common ways of thinking and ensuring personal effectiveness and value to the organization, in this case the program or institution. More research is needed to address these contextual relationships before, during and after site visits.

Summary

This study supports and adds to the Federal Department of Education’s recommendations for more stringent accreditation practices in mortuary science. Using the
population of 39 site team members who participate in the accreditation of mortuary
science programs, it queried reasons for participation, use of data source, and perceptions
of training. Overall the data show evidence of the need for more diversity and
representation of participants including more women; individuals in the age ranges under
50; diverse ethnicity; and a geographical balance by team role.

This study indicated perceived benefits of being an external evaluator on mortuary
science accreditation site visit teams. It showed the importance of participation in all areas
of the accreditation process and the opportunities that exist for learning for all site team
members. The data revealed the team members are committed to and value the work they
perform as team members. Overall, responses indicated different motives by team
members’ role but that across all roles, team members have a high regard for the
accreditation process and take their site visit team roles seriously.

The study indicated the need for more definitive recruitment and training for
potential site team members as well as continuing education for current site team members.
The findings revealed a lack of uniform procedures including training; a lack of depth of
training and a lack of continuing education training in the field of evaluation and
accreditation that would strengthen and reinforce practices. Follow up data revealed a
desire on the part of some site visit team members to be better trained in their roles in order
to be more effective team members and to have a better understanding of the accreditation
standards and process. A specific need for more research and literature pertaining to the
field of mortuary science accreditation in general also was identified.
Overall, this study supported current accreditation literature but also raised issues concerning the need to set a higher bar for the mortuary science accreditation process so continued work in this domain will help ensure that mortuary science is recognized as a health science on a level with other health science programs. As a practice, that ultimately affects all people, the need is clearly identified, the practices are important, and the need for further inquiry evident to all.
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Appendix I

ACCREDITATION OF MORTUARY SCIENCE EDUCATION

Dear Colleague,

I would like to invite you to participate in a national survey related to mortuary science accreditation. My interest extends to your role as an external evaluator in the site visit process, the reasons that motivate you to participate and your assessment of the information sources available to you during the process.

Your name has been chosen because of your participation on mortuary science external site visit accreditation teams. Your response is extremely important to me because it will be representative of mortuary science external evaluators across the country who participates in accreditation.

Please fill out this important survey today and return it in the enclosed, postage paid envelope. It should take about 10 minutes to complete. No person or facility will be named in the study. The label on your return envelop is to avoid duplication for our second mailing. My staff will open the survey and separate it from the envelope, which will be shredded so it will not compromise the anonymity of your response. There will be brief follow up random phone interviews. These will help to further validate the information received in the surveys.

There are no risks to filling out this survey. The benefits to you as an accreditation team member is the validation of the importance of the work you do as a team member and to utilize the material gained through this study to develop a manual to train new site team members for future accreditation visits.

“If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University at Albany Office of Research Compliance at 518-437-4569 (toll free 800-365-9139) or orc@uamail.albany.edu.”

The results of this study will serve two purposes. First it is part of my planned doctoral study work at the University at Albany/SUNY. Second, the results of the study, based on aggregated data, will be shared with the American Board of Funeral Service Education and others who oversee the Mortuary Science Accreditation process.

I recognize that your time is valuable and I appreciate your help. Please respond by August 25, 2008.

Again, thank you for your help in this important project.

Elaine Reinhard
Project Director
(518) 629-7113
Fax (518) 629-8025
Appendix II

ACCREDITATION OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION

Demographics:

The following sample will help us to make sure we have a representative sample of external evaluators.

1. How often have you been involved in creating a self-study or a program?
   _____ never
   _____ 1-3 times
   _____ 4-6 times
   _____ more than 6 times

2. How often have you been involved in evaluating a self-study program?
   _____ 0 times
   _____ 1-3 times
   _____ 4-6 times
   _____ more than 6 times

3. How often have you participated as an external evaluator for an accrediting agency?
   _____ 0 times
   _____ 1-3 times
   _____ 4-6 times
   _____ more than 6 times

4. Have you ever served as a consultant in program accreditation?
   _____ Yes       _____ No

5. What positions do you hold at your institution or setting? (Please indicate by percentage how much of your time applies to each area totaling 100%)
   _____ Instructor at an educational program
   _____ Director/Department head of an educational program
   _____ Dean of an educational school
   _____ Funeral service practitioner
   _____ Retired
   _____ Other: Please specify

6. During the accreditation process, my primary role is that of an:
   _____ evaluator/professional/team chair
   _____ teaching/curriculum expert/educator
   _____ practitioner/mortician/funeral director

7. Gender:
   _____ Male
   _____ Female

8. Ethnicity
   _____ White
   _____ African American
   _____ Hispanic
   _____ Asian American
   _____ Native American
   _____ Other

9. Age Range:
   _____ 20-30
   _____ 31-40
   _____ 41-50
   _____ 51-60
   _____ 61-70
   _____ 71-above

10. Part of the country you are working from:
    _____ Central
     _____ Northwest
     _____ Southwest
     _____ Southeast
     _____ Northeast
     Please note State ________________

11. Highest level of education attained:
    _____ High school
     _____ Master’s Degree
     _____ Associates Degree
     _____ Doctorate
     _____ Bachelor’s Degree
## Appendix III
### Accreditation of Funeral Service Education

**Participant Reasons Scale**

Directions: There are many reasons for participation in accreditation-related activities. The following items are designed so that you can indicate the relative importance of the general reasons you might have for participating in the accreditation process as an external evaluator. For each item, mark the numeral which best represents the degree of importance you attach to each reason. Circle only one reason for each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To further match my knowledge or skills with the demands of my professional activities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To mutually exchange thoughts with professional colleagues</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To help me be more productive in my professional role</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To enable me to better meet student expectations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To maintain my current abilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To increase the likelihood of benefits for family and friends</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. To relate my ideas to those of my professional peers</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. To maintain my identity with my profession</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. To accommodate more effectively to the needs of my students</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. To review my commitment to my profession</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. To increase the likelihood of personal financial gain</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. To learn from the interaction with other professionals</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. To help me develop leadership capabilities for my profession</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. To increase my proficiency with students</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. To consider changing the emphasis of my present professional responsibilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. To develop new professional knowledge and skills</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. To sharpen my perspective of my professional role or practice</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. To help me keep abreast of new developments in my field</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. To help me increase the likelihood that students are better served</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. To assess the direction in which my profession is going</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. To help me be more competent in my current work</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. To increase the likelihood of professional advancement</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. To be challenged by the thinking of my professional colleagues</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. To enhance the image of my profession</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. To improve my professional service to the public</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. To consider the limitations of my role as a professional</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. To develop the proficiencies necessary to maintain quality performance</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. To enhance my security in my present position</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. To maintain the quality of my professional service</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. To reflect on the value of my professional responsibilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix IV

Accreditation of Funeral Service Education

Information Preference Scale (IPS)

Directions: During the on-site visit, there are many sources of information that are available to you. The following items are designed so that you can indicate the relative importance of the information sources identified as part of the accreditation process. For each item, mark the numeral which best represents the degree of importance you attach to each information source. Circle only one response for each item.

A. Information Scale: Site Visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. Application Information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Self-study Report</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. On-site documents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Interviews with site personnel (faculty, students, preceptors and other stakeholders)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Discussions with site team members</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Information Scale: Self-study report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36. Program goals and achievement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Program organization and administration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Student issues (admissions, retention, advising)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Faculty issues (evaluation, professional development)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Curriculum issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Resources (funding, library, supplies)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Program evaluation activities (on-going)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Rank: From the following choices, please rank the sources of information from 1 through 5 in order of importance. Indicate with the number 1 the most important through number 5 that which is least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application information</th>
<th>Program goals and achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-study report</td>
<td>Program organization and administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site documents</td>
<td>Student issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with site personnel</td>
<td>Curriculum issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions with site team members</td>
<td>Resources (funding, library, supplies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program evaluation activities (on-going)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Rank: Of the parts of the self-study document used in your decision making, please rank the choices from 1 through 7 in order of importance. Indicate with the 1 the most important through number 7 that which is least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application information</th>
<th>Program goals and achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-study report</td>
<td>Program organization and administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site documents</td>
<td>Student issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with site personnel</td>
<td>Curriculum issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions with site team members</td>
<td>Resources (funding, library, supplies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program evaluation activities (on-going)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO FILL OUT THIS SURVEY

Please use the return self-address, stamped envelop to mail to:

Elaine Reinhard
Hudson Valley Community College
80 Vandevenburgh Avenue
Troy, NY 12180

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Appendix V

ACCREDITATION OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION

Phone Interview Protocol

Hello. My name is Elaine Reinhard and I am working on a planned doctoral study relating to mortuary science accreditation at the University at Albany/SUNY. I am calling to interview you to gather your perceptions of your role as an external evaluator in the site visit process, reasons that motivate you to participate and your assessment of the information sources available to you during the process. The information you provide will assist in my doctoral study as well as in clarification of the aggregated data whose results will be shared with the American Board of Funeral Service Education and others who oversee the Mortuary Science Accreditation Process. Your responses are CONFIDENTIAL and will not be shared with anyone in any way that identifies you as an individual. My goal is to evaluate the process, not to evaluate the individuals involved, and only aggregated, or group, data will be presented. Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions related to the interview you may contact: the University at Albany Office of Research Compliance at 518-437-4569 (toll free 800-365-9139) or orc@uamail.albany.edu

Name: ________________________  Date: _______________

Evaluator Role: Team Chair__________, Educator __________, Director ___________

Number of times involved creating a self-study: ________

Number of times evaluating a self-study: ______

Number of times participating as an external evaluator for accreditation: ________

Position held at institution or setting ________________ (Retired __________)

1. What initially influenced your decision to be an external evaluator for the Mortuary Science accreditation process? (Query: How did you find out about being on a site visit team? Were you recruited, self-selected, encouraged by you administration to participate? Why have you become a participant?)

2. What support, tools and resources have been made available to you in your initial training as a site team visitor and as what have currently been made available to support you as a current team member? (Query: Professional Development, technology, instructional materials, etc.)
3. What is your role as an external evaluator on the accreditation team? What do you think qualified you for that role?

4. What do you see as the top three most important components of the self-study report? (Query: What is a primary focus area for you? i.e. program goals, program administration, students, faculty, curriculum, resources, on going evaluation).

5. What area do you consider to be the most important part of a self-study document?
   a. Program goals _____
   b. Program organization_____
   c. Student issues_____
   d. Curriculum issues _____
   e. Resources_______
   f. On going evaluation _____

   Why most Important?

   What is least Important and Why?

6. Out of the following, which would you consider to be the most important source of site visit information? Least?

   Application______

   Self-study ________

   On-site documents ________

   Interviews conducted on site _________

   Discussions with site team members________

   Why?

7. How did any professional development prepare you to be an external evaluation team member? (Query: Who provided the training and where?)

8. What additional support is needed for external site team members?
9. What is the most helpful thing you learned or gained through your participation as an external site team member?

10. Is there anything you would like to see included in the training of new external site team members?

11. What do you perceive as the benefits to you of being an external site team member?

12. Have you experienced any negative impacts to being an external site team member? (Query: What are they? Were they temporary or permanent impacts?)

13. Any additional comments?
Appendix VI

ACCREDITATION OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION

Telephone and Electronic Interview Protocol

My name is Elaine Reinhard and I am working on a planned doctoral study relating to mortuary science accreditation at the University at Albany/SUNY. I am calling to interview you as a follow up a previous interview we had to gather your perceptions as to site visit team training and important of site visit information. The information you provide will assist in my doctoral study as well as in clarification of the aggregated data whose results will be shared with the American Board of Funeral Service Education and others who oversee the Mortuary Science Accreditation Process. Your responses are CONFIDENTIAL and will not be shared with anyone in any way that identifies you as an individual. My goal is to evaluate the process, not to evaluate the individuals involved, and only aggregated, or group, data will be presented. Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions related to the interview you may contact: the University at Albany Office of Research Compliance at 518-437-4569 (toll free 800-365-9139) or orc@uamail.albany.edu

Name: ________________________ Date: _______________

Evaluator Role: Team Chair__________, Educator __________, Director ___________

1. What support, tools and resources have been made available to you in your initial training as a site team visitor and as what have currently been made available to support you as a current team member? (Query: what support received and who provided it? What specific training did you receive prior to your first site visit? What resources did you receive during your training that supported what you were being taught?)

2. What do you see as the most important component of the self-study report? (Query: program goals, program administration, students, faculty, curriculum, resources, ongoing evaluation).

3. What area do you consider to be the most important part of a self-study document?
   a. Program goals _____
   b. Program organization____
   c. Student issues____
   d. Curriculum issues _____
   e. Resources________
   f. On going evaluation _____

Why most Important? What is least Important and Why?
4. Out of the following, which would you consider to be the most important source of site visit information? Least?

Application_______

Self-study ________

On-site documents ________

Interviews conducted on site ________

Discussions with site team members________

Why?

5. Have you ever received additional support as a site team member and if so who provided it to you? What form did it take? (e.g. verbal written or spoken)

6. What would you like to see included in the training of new external site team members that you might have like to have when you were trained?