



## Site Reviewer Resource Guide May 2015

**Overview:** Congratulations! You have agreed to represent COSMA and excellence in Sport Management education through the site visit process. While you are likely very familiar with COSMA policies and procedures as well as the details related to each Principle, this guide may help you organize your thoughts and help you start conversations and touch on topics that are important to cover in a site visit.

**Where:** The site visit will take place on the campus you are visiting, and maybe across more than one campus or site depending on the size and scope of the program(s). The hosting institution will have a room prepared for you that contains materials related to the items presented in the self-study document. If you require additional materials or clarification, ask the Campus Coordinator (likely the person who primarily wrote the self-study) to assist you.

Part of the site visit will entail taking a tour of offices, classrooms, the library, computer labs and any other facilities utilized by SM faculty and students. Wear comfortable shoes or be prepared to change shoes so that you can take this walk. Let the Campus Coordinator know before you arrive if you need any accommodations in getting around for the tour or in any other way.

**Who:** You will meet with faculty, students, support staff, librarians, administrators, alumni (optional), advisory board members (if applicable) and individuals involved in outcomes assessment (if applicable). When you review the draft site visit schedule, determine if the individuals and the time allotted is appropriate based on what you have read in the self-study document. You should meet with **all** SM faculty (full-time, part-time, adjuncts) and the President of the institution. There are circumstances in which you won't meet with the President, but the reasons should be made clear by the hosting Department. You may meet with the Dean and/or Provost and other top administrators that are involved in programmatic oversight and decision making processes. Again, who you meet with is in part dictated by the content of the self-study. What you discuss with the various individuals depends upon their knowledge of the Department, their involvement in enabling the Department to access resources and the knowledge they possess relevant to each Principle.

**What:** What do you talk about? What kinds of questions are appropriate for the various stakeholders? What does it really mean to "validate" the contents of the self-study document? This is the challenge facing a reviewer since being on site is on-the-job training coupled with preparation – even so, you cannot be fully prepared

for everything. This guide is intended to provide you with broad questions to start conversations which will lead to more specific questions, comments and requests.

The site visit is not just you interviewing people as a journalist would – it is listening, comparing how different people answer the same question, reading between the lines and, at times, directly asking about specific deficits or areas of noncompliance. In addition, you are there as a liaison to COSMA – by clarifying the process, explaining what areas are deficient and what areas could be improved, brainstorming solutions when presented with a problem or difficult situation and tying everything back to the COSMA Principles. At times, it will be appropriate for you to reference your own program and experiences you have as an SM faculty member and/or in the SM industry. Use this tool judiciously to make comparisons, not to brag or put the program down.

To assist you in touching upon key aspects of each of the Principles as well as to provide you with examples of questions you might ask various stakeholders, I offer the following suggestions:

### **Side Bar: Hospitality**

In general, the hosting institution wants to impress you, maximize your perception of them during the visit and try to sway you away from the negative and toward the positive. This is a good thing! However, there are some limitations, although what those limits are is sometimes ambiguous. In general, it is okay for you to accept a small token/gift from the institution such as a mug, pen, pad of paper, etc. Some institutions will have a small gift basket in your hotel room – this is okay. They will be paying for your meals and snacks and may be trying to show you the local fare and venues. However, it is *not* okay to accept anything that is similar to cash – tickets, gift cards, vouchers or coupons. Kindly let them know that while you appreciate their sentiment and hospitality, you are prohibited from accepting these types of gifts.

What does the institution's hospitality tell you about the program? It may simply show you the degree to which the program has prepared for the site visit and thought about the details that will make the visit go smoothly. They may anticipate your every need, for example, by escorting you to a parking garage so you can find your car. Different schools have different budgets for these sorts of things and you should not compare one institution to another. In other words, do not be wooed or wowed by a fancy gift basket! Be more concerned about the content of the program and student learning experience.

### **Site Visit: The Night Before**

If you arrive at your site visit location before dinner, the host(s) may ask you to join them and colleagues for dinner. You are free to decline, but if you agree, use this dinner to talk generally about the site visit and to get to know your dinner mates on a general but more personal level. This dinner can be a time to get the “jitters” out for everyone and to show that you are a human being! Of course, you may also learn

valuable information during the conversation, so listen carefully and take a few notes privately. If individuals – such as alumni or advisory board members – are present at this dinner, ask them general questions, for example (but not limited to):

What is your connection to X University's SM program?

How did you get involved?

What do you like most about what the program is doing?

What areas could they improve?

What do you know about COSMA and the accreditation process?

How much involvement do you have with the faculty? The students? Internships?

The curriculum?

### **Site Visit: Day 1**

You should have an initial meeting with the key individuals taking charge of the accreditation process. You will see the room they have assigned to you and the materials they have provided. You may request internet access, printing (if needed) and a place to charge your phone. You can discuss any logistics of your day during this meeting and then open with some general questions/comments:

1. Overview – succinctly describe the purpose of the visit and COSMA process.
2. Start with general areas you will focus on, based on your reading of the self-study.
3. Let them know that if there are any areas they know they want “assistance” with, to talk about that with you. This might mean – “We really need an additional faculty member” or “ Our office space is very tight and it impacts our advising/research/preparation.”
4. Depending on who you are meeting with during this day, ask if there are any issues to raise or focus on with those individuals (see #3).
5. Answer any questions they have about content or process.

**Administrators:** You must walk a fine line when meeting with top-level administrators during your site visit. You want to appear neutral in that you are there to make an objective assessment. At the same time, your voice may have a positive impact on requests that the Department has not been successful in making. In this way, you may use the material you read about in the self-study, and comments made by your hosts, to subtly raise areas of weakness and to suggest ways the circumstances could be improved. In general, you are assessing their knowledge of and involvement in the program, including the support provided and access the Department has to them. Some potential questions may include:

How frequently are you in contact with the SM Department?

What kinds of requests do you field from them?

How do they fit into the institution as a whole?

In what ways is the Department part of campus-wide committees such as curriculum, general education, tenure/promotion, etc.?

What do you see as the strengths of the Department? The weaknesses? How can these be improved?

What challenges do you think the SM Department faces?

How can we as representatives of an accrediting body help the SM Department?

Whether you know it yet or not, these questions are part of the Department's documentation of Principle 3: Curriculum; Principle 4: Faculty; Principle 6: Resources and Principle 7: Internal and External Relationships (among others).

**Students:** The students you meet should span as wide a spectrum of the types of students admitted to the program as possible. Of course, they will generally pick the best students! Students will be honest about what they like, what they don't like and ways to improve the program. You can ask them about any areas in which you would like to validate what is happening – with respect to faculty, resources, outcomes assessment, and preparation for graduation, internships, research and a career. Encourage them to ask you questions as well.

### **Site Visit: Days 1 and 2**

The following provides some sample questions that may be used to talk specifically about each of the Principles. They are not required, nor are they exhaustive or specific. There will be a time during the site visit where you sit with the Department and ask specific questions related to their self-study – items to clarify, items to verify and a chance to offer suggestions for improvement.

### **Principle 1: Outcomes Assessment**

Do the measurement tools and rubrics appropriately fit/measure the student learning outcomes with which they are associated?

How does the program use the data collected to make decisions?

How do they follow up on these decisions?

What systematic methods do they use to create a feedback loop of data – interpretation – action plan – follow up (realized outcomes)?

How is the student learning outcomes data used in strategic planning?

### **Principle 2: Strategic Planning**

In addition to having the parts of the strategic plan in place, how do they use the information to help guide the program?

How does the institutional strategic plan fit into the Department's strategic plan?

Is the length of the cycle of strategic planning appropriate and functional?

Are appropriate individuals involved?

What would they want to improve about the process?

### **Principle 3: Curriculum**

(Undergraduate programs only) Are they covering the CPC areas appropriately?

Are the CPC areas covered by faculty with appropriate qualifications?

Are tracks, concentrations, minors and cognates appropriate for the major?

How does general education support a student's knowledge/growth in the SM major?

Are any content areas weaker than others and why?

(Graduate programs only) Do graduate students receive appropriate supervision by doctorally qualified faculty?

Are admissions requirements appropriate to ensure that students have a reasonable chance to succeed in the program?

Does the curricular content support the program and institutional mission?

#### **Principle 4: Faculty**

Are faculty appropriately qualified to teach the courses to which they are assigned?

Are faculty loads appropriate and in line with university policy?

Does the Department think there are "enough" faculty to meet their mission?

How many adjuncts/part time faculty are there?

What role do adjuncts/part time faculty have in departmental processes?

What role, if any, do graduate students play in teaching? How are they supervised?

What are the university policies on faculty development? Are they sufficient?

Are the institutional policies for faculty conveyed to the SM faculty and are they appropriate?

#### **Principle 5: Scholarly & Professional Activities**

Is there enough financial support so that faculty may participate in a range of S&P activities?

Are there any areas that are weaker than others in terms of participation by the faculty?

What improvements could be made?

Do the type of S&P activities engaged in by SM faculty reflect the program and institutional mission?

#### **Principle 6: Resources**

Are the resources allotted to the program "enough" – poor, adequate, good, excellent?

In what areas do faculty and students indicate they want more resources?

Does the proportion of the total institutional budget allotted to the Department allow for growth and change?

In general, note where there are any discrepancies in what is allotted and whether that is adequate or not.

#### **Principle 7: Internal and External Relationships**

What are the relationships like between the SM Department and other departments on campus?

What role does the SM Department play on campus?

Does the SM Department have appropriate external linkages to the sport industry?

How could these be improved?

How do alumni/advisory board members help the SM Department with these linkages?

Are relationships with other educational institutions (e.g., community colleges, international institutions) clearly articulated?

**Principle 8: Educational Innovation**

What does the program do that is “innovative” – in terms of teaching, resources, technology, methodology, activities, etc.?

Are there any discrepancies between what they think is innovative and what you think is innovative?

Is the administration supportive of various types of innovation?

**Exit Interview:** In reality, you are preparing for the exit interview before you arrive on campus. During this final conversation, you will convey a number of observations to the program:

- 1) What you saw and experienced
- 2) At what you think they excel
- 3) What improvements you think they could make
- 4) Your appreciation for their time, effort and hospitality

You should prepare notes for this segment of the site visit and let the program know that they may decide who attends this session (i.e., a small group or a wider circle). Your comments should be inclusive so that when they receive the summary letter based on your report, there are no surprises. In other words, based on this discussion, they should have a good sense of where they stand. Remember, you are not speaking for the Board of Commissioners during this session, you are talking to them about your observations.