



CACREP creates international registry

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) became an international accrediting organization in 1989 by accrediting three counseling programs at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Canada. CACREP continued to accredit UBC's programs for more than 15 years and, during that time period, also granted program accreditation to another Canadian institution — Trinity Western University. There was no fanfare associated with these accrediting decisions because there was no real sense that CACREP had "gone international." Limited contact with program faculty from other countries made these decisions seem like business as usual.

This is no longer the case. In the past decade, CACREP has received a growing number of inquiries from programs on other continents, including South America, Asia and Africa. The high volume of inquiries caused CACREP to begin examining issues associated with international accreditation and recognition. This examination revealed many challenges related to conducting accreditation at an international level, because the degree expectations and structures of other countries' educational systems often do not mesh well with accrediting standards developed for programs in the United States. For example, CACREP programs must document a minimum of a master's degree. Many countries, however, do not teach counseling at the graduate level. In some cases, counselor training occurs through nondegree coursework offered by private institutes. Language and cultural differences also abound when attempting to review international programs against U.S.-centric standards. Furthermore, *counseling* is not a term that is even known in many countries. For example, counseling is known as *psicológica orientación* in Mexico.

Faced with these challenges, CACREP had to decide if it could provide an international quality assurance review process that would meet the needs of inquiring countries without diminishing

the existing importance of the master's degree and professional title recognition in the United States. As a result, CACREP has moved slowly in responding to requests for an international accreditation process, taking the time to examine the merits of expanding its role beyond North America. The decision to proceed was based on information gathered from multiple resources by attending international conferences, meeting with faculty from international "counseling" programs, working with non-U.S. programs applying for accreditation using the CACREP Standards and consulting with board and staff members from the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) and NBCC-International, as well as with the CEO of the Center for Quality Assurance in International Education.

The result is the development of a new approach to working with international programs and a new International Committee charged with the continued development and management of CACREP's international initiatives. The committee will consist of six to eight individuals and will include international representation. CACREP will appoint the committee's initial membership until such time that selection or appointment criteria are developed. Rebecca Stanard, a professor at the University of West Georgia, is currently chairing the International Committee. The committee's initial and primary responsibility is implementation of the new approach, which is being named the International Registry of Counselor Education Programs (IRCEP).

The primary purpose of IRCEP is to provide recognition to legitimate counselor preparation programs that meet stated requirements for inclusion on the registry. As part of the application process, programs will be required to document through an electronic submission their legitimacy to operate, along with evidence of a written mission statement, program objectives, curricular experiences that align with IRCEP criteria, sufficient and appropriate faculty resources, a designated person for program oversight and procedures and criteria for selecting

and assessing students throughout the preparation program. Unlike CACREP's accreditation standards, the IRCEP requirements will not be degree specific, although programs must be offered at the postsecondary level. Programs that successfully complete the application and review process will be listed on the IRCEP Registry.

CACREP plans to launch IRCEP in spring 2009 after the International Committee membership is finalized and training is completed on the application review process. A website for IRCEP is under construction and will include details about the registry criteria, review procedures and fee structure. All currently accredited CACREP programs will be grandfathered onto the registry because they will have already met the IRCEP criteria. This listing will be in addition to their CACREP-accredited status.

With IRCEP in place, what began as a small step 20 years ago is now official — CACREP is an international organization. There is still no fanfare, but this is nevertheless a momentous event. Much thought and effort have been put into IRCEP's development. While issues will inevitably arise, CACREP believes this new program will offer great benefits to counseling programs and counselor educators around the globe. By providing program curricular and contact information, the registry will serve as an avenue for sharing teaching ideas, developing new areas of professional knowledge, facilitating faculty and student exchanges and fostering the ongoing development and recognition of the counseling profession worldwide.

For further information regarding IRCEP's timeline, contact cacrep@cacrep.org ♦

Carol L. Bobby is the executive director of CACREP. Robert I. Urofsky is CACREP's director of accreditation.

Letters to the editor:
ct@counseling.org