

of our own NADE state chapter of NYCLSA (New York College Learning Skills Association). That led to sending suggestions to the NADE committee on the *Guides*, which led to joining the NADE Certification Board, which led to my continuing involvement with the NADE Accreditation Commission. Let me simply add comments from a recent NADE Accreditation Institute, where the Commission provides a full-day training on the application process for NADE accreditation. Only part of that is about using the *Guides*, but here are samples of what people say:

- The self-study will help me see what we can work on to improve our program.
- I learned that self-study is absolutely crucial to the program's development!

- I need to look at my data to see where improvements is needed. Then, I will write goals on improving outcomes. But I will use the *Guides* to create Action Plans to get us there!

So yes, the *NADE Self-Evaluation Guides* have been central to my professional life, on many levels. I hope they can be in yours, too.

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## The Journey Toward NADE Accreditation: Investments Reap Benefits

### Stephanie Kratz

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Fall 2016 saw the completion of a multi-year process for my program as we completed our application for NADE accreditation. Happily, our application was approved, and as of February 2018, the developmental English program at Heartland Community College will be accredited. I won't lie: this rosy picture looks nicer from this side of all the work it entailed. The accreditation application was rigorous to be sure. But the benefits for the faculty, the college, and our students have been remarkable.

The multi-year process began in 2009 when English faculty reviewed data from the National Community College Benchmark Project. The data showed low success rates and poor persistence from developmental into college-level courses. As a member of the Developmental English Redesign Team, I studied various models of developmental English programs across the country. Research led us to a model of accelerated developmental education called the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) which was first developed at the Community College of Baltimore County. Several characteristics of the ALP model impressed us, and the redesign group decided to adopt an accelerated program at HCC.

Substantial institutional resources were afforded to us. We participated in a course redesign academy and attended the Conference on Acceleration in Developmental Education. The college invested in better institutional data reporting, in large part because of our requests for

accurate data for the accreditation process. I created a new course, trained faculty, launched the small (four-section) pilot, facilitated course adjustments, and eventually moved to program-wide implementation of ALP.

To describe my program's journey in NADE terms, the ALP implementation became our primary Action Project. Documentation of the baseline and comparative data, while tedious for an English teacher like me who thinks in words instead of numbers, was revealing and informative. Take falling withdrawal rates, for instance. Since the implementation of ALP, the number of students who withdraw from our developmental English classes has been cut in half. Furthermore, the ALP students actually have a lower drop-out rate than the regular college-level students with whom they sit in a co-requisite course. Similarly, we have also seen a significant improvement in success: nearly a 10% increase.

Not all of the data showed such dramatic improvements. For instance, developmental students are less likely to pass the college-level course than regular college-level students. However, we are confident that our trends from pre- to post-action project are moving in the right direction. All new programs will hit some bumps in the road, and we will continue to self-assess and revise as needed. Part of continuing NADE accreditation, for instance, encourages monitoring the data over time, allowing for small data sets

to grow and lessening the effects of semesters that were exceptions to the rule.

For me, one of the most useful aspects of completing the accreditation was my close contact and regular communication with Lisa Putnam-Cole, a member of the NADE Board and a HCC colleague. Lisa guided me through the maze of data mining. If asked to offer any suggestions to NADE about how to improve the accreditation process (hey, wait, I think that's what I'm doing here!), I would recommend a close NADE mentor for all applicants. Having previously completed the accreditation process herself, Lisa was able to commiserate with my struggles and offer suggestions about the lessons she learned throughout the process.

The journey to NADE accreditation was long and challenging. Honestly, my program weighed whether to complete the process even after the self-study was completed. The administration and faculty knew that it would

be an investment in resources and personnel, and we had learned so much about ourselves already that we questioned whether to continue. Having completed accreditation, of course, it is easier to sing its praises. But I honestly believe that the knowledge we have gained is worth the work. I furthered my professional goals throughout the journey; the college values the accreditation; and—most importantly—students benefit from our increased dedication to their learning and success.

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## The Value of Accreditation for Learning Centers and Their Programs

Geoffrey Bailey

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Creating a culture of assessment is an essential practice and mindset for postsecondary institutions as well as the units and departments embedded within our respective campuses. Although it may sound daunting at first glance, simply put, assessment is “a set of processes designed to improve, demonstrate, and inquire about student learning” (Mentowski, 1998). Arguably, there is tremendous value to having a “systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs” so that we better understand student learning and can effectively scale such learning and practices (Marchese, 1987). Moreover, assessing the learning process goes beyond measuring learning outcomes and incorporates future-thinking (Salisbury, 2013).

Although most learning centers and their respective programs have increasingly engaged in data collection and assessment efforts, not all have fully explored the value of benchmarking and accreditation. For over twenty years, learning center pioneers have promulgated the benefits of evaluation, which dovetail well with the value of benchmarking and accreditation. Christ, Sheets, and Smith (2000) spotlighted such values in an interview with David Gerkin, which included justification for a program's resources, people, and its very existence. Additionally, evaluation provides a lens through which one can determine what works well, what needs improvement, and what

can enhance decision-making (Christ, Sheets, & Smith, 2000).

Similarly, benchmarking fosters opportunities to reflect on what is working well, what areas would benefit from improvements or changes, and drives more deliberate strategic thinking and performance (Martin Epper, 1999). This is critical given that our most important stakeholders, our students, will reap the proverbial benefits of better services and instructional support. Additionally, undertaking these efforts in the context of accreditation helps ensure that we are implementing best practices backed by research and professional practices in our field. To that end, the NADE Accreditation Commission:

...exists to improve and enhance the success of students at all levels of academic preparation, as well as to facilitate the professional growth of developmental educators by setting standards of best practice, emphasizing the use of theory to inform practice, and promoting effective evaluation and quality research in developmental education and learning assistance programs. (NADE Accreditation, 2016).

As a professional who has been through the accreditation process in one learning center, as well as having served on the accreditation review team since 2010, I want to offer a couple of reflections for professionals who are