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October 2005

Letters to the Editor

Standards in Education

I am writing to offer comments on the August 2005 SN [interview with ABET President Richard O. Anderson](#). In reviewing the article, I focused on the article's discussion concerning standards education. The development of standards education programs for university students and other interested parties is the primary purpose of The Center for Global Standards Analysis which I chair. The article was well-written, informative and thought provoking. Clearly, ABET's standards education initiatives are important and have the potential to be a significant influence in the education of U.S. engineering students. The Center looks forward to ABET's report on the effects of its standards education initiatives.

From the Center's perspective, important issues related to ABET's standards education initiatives are (1) whether ABET's initiatives go far enough, and (2) whether ABET's initiatives are sufficient to establish standards education as a top priority in U.S. schools of engineering. The Center is concerned that standards education in the United States is not currently a top national priority in the private, public or academic sectors. In 2004, the Center published a national survey on standards education at engineering schools in the United States. The major findings of the survey were:

1. Standards education is not a priority issue among schools of engineering in the United States; and
2. Schools of Engineering in the United States do yet not accept the critical nature of standards in the new 21st century global economy.

The Center's survey can be reviewed at the Center's website: http://engineering.cua.edu/StandardsCenter/center_for_global_standards_anal.htm.

This finding is consistent with educational initiatives in the draft U.S. Standards Strategy, which calls upon universities and colleges within the United States to create standards education programs in fields of study

such as engineering, science, technology, government and public policy, economics and law.

Much work needs to be done in the field of standards education. Intense competition in the global marketplace, based in significant part on engineering standards, waits for no one. Consider, for example, that South Korea launched a major standards education program in 2004 that now involves schools of engineering at 40 universities and more than 2,000 students. By comparison, the ABET criteria require an engineering standards component in the undergraduate curriculum, however, it does not require that engineering students take an entire course in engineering standards. In 2005, the School of Engineering at Catholic University is the only engineering school in the United States that presently offers an entire graduate course concerning engineering standards.

Maintaining leadership in standards education is a critical step necessary to ensure the economic future of the United States. The Center is hopeful that ABET will continue to significantly enhance criteria for standards education programs at U.S. schools of engineering, and consider whether it is necessary to require that all U. S. schools of engineering offer standards education as a required subject in a separate and distinct course.

The Center is hopeful that all parties in the private, public and academic sectors of the United States will take ownership of the new U.S. Standards Strategy and take whatever steps are necessary to enhance standards education programs in their respective sector.

Donald E. Purcell, Chairman
The Center for Global Standards Analysis

A Helpful Issue

For me, the August 2005 issue of SN has been the most interesting edition of your journal in many years. I greatly appreciated the articles about ASTM's global focus and the very comprehensive articles on subchair responsibilities, handling negative votes, preparing standards for ballot, and publicizing committee activities. Even though I have been subcommittee chairman of D24.21 on Carbon Black Surface Area for quite some time, I could learn a lot by reading these excellent contributions.

Many thanks to you and to the authors!

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