TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Accreditation Working Group Draft Report Update

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:
Provide an extension to October 1, 2021, for submission of the final report

ACTION REQUESTED BY:
Jennifer (Jen) K. Sweeney, Chair, Accreditation Working Group

CONTACT PERSON:
Karen O'Brien, Director, Office for Accreditation x 2434

DATE: June 29, 2021

BACKGROUND:

Responding to the ALA Executive Board questions

1. **Cost breakdown/analysis of COA activities as a percentage of overall OA budget:**

   Office for Accreditation Staff Response: ~$42,000/year typically for CoA-only expenses for travel, lodging, and meals for the various kinds of quarterly meetings: Fall orientation of new members and planning, Winter and Summer closing of comprehensive reviews, and in Spring, responding to interim reporting.

2. **Recommendation of a prospective path (from among the three suggested) for COA that would address the issue of COA feeling "hindered in addressing CHEA requirements, and prospective associated costs/budget**

   Office for Accreditation Staff Response: CHEA understands that support from a parent institution is or can be part of the support mix (as it is with academic programs) and has never pushed back on the OA budgetary trend data that the Office has provided in the CHEA reviews. ALA pays no membership dues to CHEA, but does invest in a comprehensive review by CHEA every 7 years that cost ~$18,000.

3. **Recommendation for engaging those information- (but not necessarily) library-centered institutions (SLA, MLA, SAA, ASIST, iSchools, etc.)**

   Office for Accreditation Staff Response: Costs that ALA covers (not fees that the Office has ALA Accounting bill) amount to ~$180,000/year.

   The "Moderate risk" Solution and Recommendation 3 in the AWG Report, "Establish a new organization within ALA with independent governance and membership procedures, supported by a coalition of relevant professional associations; create a more independent accreditation

entity within ALA," seem best by consensus in discussions with Senior ALA Executives, Tracie Hall and Lorelle Swader.

If ALA were to offer the 28 ALA Affiliate member organizations the opportunity to appoint members (one or more members) and provide financial support/ sponsorship with the 'branding' boost and 'privileges' (direct input and decision-making) that would accompany it, that would mean $6,400/year, per CoA seat.

ALA might want to retain for the president-elect the annual appointment of the CoA chair from among the seated members in that member's final year of term. ALA could choose to offer appointment privileges to only those Affiliate orgs which usually have members that overlap with CoA appointments, such as AALL, ASIS&T, ALISE, ARL, and MLA. ALA would want to ask for some sort of 'promissory' letter from each.

4. **The report from the AWG in April stated they would be issuing a final report to the Board which would include input from LIS programs gathered during spring 2021. Will that input be in the final report?**

   Accreditation Working Group Response: Yes, the AWG is planning to include the results of the data gathered from LIS programs in the final report. The timeline for collecting the information from the programs has been extended into the summer, so the AWG plans to have a final report to the ALA Exec Board sometime in the fall.

5. **It was stated in the report that many LIS programs are unable to support increased accreditation fees. There is no data analysis in the report to support this claim. Can the WG provide any?**

   Accreditation Working Group Response: The statement was made based on comments/conversations members of the AWG have had with LIS program directors. A question related to this will be included in the input gathered from LIS programs this summer. The AWG would anticipate collecting responses to whether or not a program would be willing and/or able to support an increase in accreditation fees necessitated by changes to the current structure and/or processes around accreditation.

6. **The report states that the current OA budget is inadequate for the work, can they provide data and examples for us to illustrate this? It also states that the budget doesn't allow for remuneration to volunteers who work on the committee. Is there another unit in ALA that provides remuneration? What exactly are they looking to provide?**

   Accreditation Working Group Response: The COA budget shows that many of the COA expenses are covered by the ALA rather than through funds generated by the COA. In reviewing financial information from other programmatic accreditors, the AWG found that the majority of accreditors do not have such a large portion of their budget funded by their parent organization. Most programmatic accreditors do not function as a committee of the parent organization as is the structure currently for COA. Most accrediting agencies operate totally independent from or at least operate more independently than currently occurs with COA. Most accrediting agencies cover all of the Board member's expenses for attending all board meetings; COA board members are expected to cover (or have their employer cover) their expenses for attendance at two of the board meetings each year. Some accreditors also provide honorariums for board members.

7. **The report states that the current appointment process creates potential for conflict of interest. Can they explain this in more detail?**

    Accreditation Working Group Response: Currently all of the COA members are appointed by an officer of the parent organization executive committee. This differs from most accrediting agencies whose board members are elected by the accrediting agency board or through a vote by accredited programs. This creates separation between the parent organization and the accrediting board helping to ensure there is not a real or perceived conflict of interest with the parent organization influencing the work of the accrediting agency.

8. **The report states that ALA governance presents barriers to the COA in doing its work in a timely fashion. I'd like some detail and examples on exactly what these barriers are.**

    Office for Accreditation Staff Response: Executive Board formation of task forces, etc., especially the ones that have been triggered by an accredited program (Pratt Institute's Tula Giannini to then President-elect Barbara Stripling, as confirmed by Immediate Past-President Jim Neal while in open session with the Board) are burdensome to the Board and to COA and undermine the integrity and reputation of COA. COA response to the Board, which in developing it took away time from the Committee's charge of executing the accreditation program and developing Standards is at: https://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/officers/eb_documents/2017_2018ebdocuments/ebd5_3_COA_responses.pdf. Board breaches in policy such as this one: I.21.2 Complaints against the COA (I.21 Complaints [pdf]), in which a Board member should confer with the Office before triggering efforts that present barriers to CoA and the Office "doing its work in a timely fashion."

9. **The report references the work done in 2002, has OA or the committee done any work to bring recommended changes forward to improve any of these items listed in the report within the current ALA structure in the past 20 years?**

    Office for Accreditation Staff Response: Increases in fees to programs with an ALA-accredited status have been brought forward incrementally, the latest in October I.23 Fees [pdf].
    The Office works regularly with the ALA Development Office to seek funding. Sponsorship of specific kinds of activities such as Standards development have been explored lately. Sponsorship was acquired in 2007 for the CoA 50th Anniversary Celebration (Marquis Who's Who $16,000).

10. **There was an accreditation report issued in 2016 from a committee tasked with looking at this issue. It wasn't referenced in the WG report. I want to know if they looked at it while doing their work.**

    Yes, the AWG looked at those Task Force Reports. The OA-CoA response to those Reports is referenced above and is at
    https://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/officers/eb_documents/2017_2018ebdocuments/ebd5_3_COA_responses.pdf

    # End #