Setting Up and Maintaining A Strong Industrial Advisory

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Abstract: We focus on the development and maintenance of a strong industrial advisory board at a small- to medium-size university in the context of accreditation. From creating the advisory board, to faculty involvement, to maximizing the use of the advisory board in the assessment process, to keeping the advisory board fresh, many challenges that a school faces with its advisory board are discussed. Thoughts on how to select advisory board members and maintain a critical mass at meetings are discussed. Typical pitfalls are covered, as are some experiences from the successful development of an advisory board. Examples of how advisory boards can be used in the assessment process are presented.

1. Introduction

This paper discusses *industrial advisory boards (IABs), advisory boards* or *boards* for short, in the context of accreditation. Advisory boards are also referred to as external advisory boards, industrial advisory councils, professional advisory boards, affiliates boards, community advisory boards, and the like. Deans often drive the creation of advisory boards. Although our focus is on the role that advisory boards play in the accreditation process, sometimes the primary purpose of an advisory board may be for fund raising, for gaining political influence, for developing a student internship program, or for placing graduates of the program. We are concerned with advisory boards at the departmental level rather than at the college or university level. Our paper is slanted toward the computing disciplines, but the general ideas carry over to other fields as well. This work is presented with the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology's (ABET) accreditation process and requirements in mind.

An advisory board can provide useful feedback to a program, particularly relating to *program educational objectives* (*PEOs*), and that domain, rather than say, curriculum development, is the realm of this paper. As we will see in section 4, PEOs are long-term career and professional accomplishments of graduates, so advisory board members are in a good position to provide information about PEOs. Of course, many programs are new to the accreditation process, and, in particular, assessment, so it is a good idea for at least one or two leaders in the department to