

Education Committee report: March 2025

National Association of University Forest Resource Programs (NAUFRP) Executive Committee meeting, Washington DC.

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1. SAF Accreditation - Education Policy Review Committee

Key personnel at SAF:

Erin Turner, Director of Credentialling.

Su Ann Shupp, Accreditation Manager.

The education committee chair continues to serve on the Education Policy Review Committee (EPRC) of SAF and was reappointed in December 2023. In addition, the chair was appointed as liaison to the Committee on Accreditation (COA), a new position designed to assist in information sharing between these two groups.

SAF is in the final stages of preparing to submit an application to CHEA (application deadline April 1). Members of the EPRC have reviewed each section of the application and provided feedback.

The recent executive orders were discussed by the EPRC, especially in relation to diversity related programs. Discussion among EPRC and SAF resulted in some wording to be shared with program and visiting teams relating to compliance with EOs.

“We recognize that particular accreditation standards may conflict with certain laws, policies, regulations, and guidance. If this is the case, programs may use discretion when indicating any such conflicts in their program's self-evaluation report and/or corresponding communications with their visiting team and the Committee on Accreditation or the Committee on Forest Technology School Accreditation to ensure their institution's policy constraints are considered during the accreditation review process. SAF reserves the right to request additional documentation as evidence of such conflict.”

The communication to program also included a reminder to submit substantive change reports to SAF for changes such as changes in program learning outcomes, administration or administrative structure, financial and other institutional support, complement of faculty, curriculum (including dissolution or addition of concentrations) and names of degrees, majors, or concentrations.

Chapter in the 125 SAF anniversary publication Our Forests, Our Future. Opportunities for improving the quality of forestry education. Sharik, Storer, and Bal. Includes a sidebar by Linda Nagel entitled What the next 25 years will look like for forest and natural resource education. Preprint of the book have been reviewed, and the final version of the book should be available shortly.

2. Updates on enrollments in Natural Resource disciplines.

Terry Sharik and Tara Bal are preparing a manuscript that includes a 10-year update of national Natural Resources enrollment trends. The results of the most recent data that are available present some interesting trends, and these will be discussed at the General Assembly. This provides NAUFRP with a preview of some of the results that will be included in a peer reviewed manuscript and provides the opportunity for discussion regarding the reasons behind some of the trends that have been observed.

3. Artificial Intelligence

Following the discussion at the March Executive Committee meeting, the Education Committee hosted a short workshop "AI in forestry education - opportunities and challenges" at the General Assembly. This workshop focused on the use of Generative AI (GAI). The workshop was well received and included some hands-on use of AI tools.

The goals are to:

- Compare notes and discuss how our programs, units and institutions are prepared for the new world
- Identify gaps in our integration of AI into our programs
- Identify areas where the Education Committee can assist programs. This might include information gathering, pulling together resources to share, and other opportunities that will be identified at the workshop.

As a community it is important to embrace the opportunities as we prepare students for a workforce in which AI will be omnipresent, and it is also exciting to contemplate and prepare for what the next generation of AI tools will enable us to do to help ensure the success of faculty and our students.