REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY SITES

Background: At its August 2019 meeting, the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), directed the formal study of the use of sites where educational activity occurs (domestic and international) for all programs under its purview, with a report on progress in Winter 2020 and culmination of the study through a Commission-only Mega Issue Discussion in Summer 2020. The Commission further directed that through the study of educational activity sites, the Commission will also study the Policy Statement on Reporting and Approval of Sites Where Educational Activity Occurs as it relates to the classification of “supplemental” sites for required community service and/or service learning requirements, as well as sites that are owned by the sponsoring institution or where the sponsoring organization has legal responsibility and operational oversight.

In Fall 2019, the Commission Chair appointed the following individuals to the Ad Hoc Committee on Educational Activity Sites: Dr. Steven Friedrichsen (Committee chair), Dr. Kevin Haubrick, Dr. Susan Kass, Dr. Steven Levy, Dr. William Nelson, Dr. Bruce Rotter, Dr. Timothy Schwartz, and Dr. Marshal Titus.

The Ad Hoc Committee conducted tele-/web-conference calls on October 29, 2019 and December 6, 2019. Below is a summary of the activities related to the Ad Hoc Committee’s meetings.

October 29, 2019 Meeting: All Ad Hoc Committee members except Dr. Susan Kass were present for the first meeting. Dr. Arthur Chen-Shu Jee, chair, and Dr. Jeffery Hicks, vice chair, Commission on Dental Accreditation, ex-officio, were also in attendance. Additionally, Dr. Sherin Tooks, director, CODA, and Mr. Gregg Marquardt, manager, CODA, were in attendance.

The Ad Hoc Committee convened its first meeting with a review of the history of and charge to the Committee. The Ad Hoc Committee also reviewed meeting materials and proposed materials for future meetings, which included: 1) the Committee’s charge, 2) reports leading to development of the Ad Hoc Committee, 3) current policies on the use of educational activity sites and related policies, and 4) a topical outline of potential data to gather for committee consideration including, for example: information on the Commission’s 2015 Mega Issue on Off-Campus Sites; CODA’s strategic plan; the number of programs, site visitors and site visits per discipline; survey data on the current and potential future utilization of educational activity sites by dental education programs under CODA’s purview; the future landscape of dental education; the general logistics and costs to facilitate site visits; the Commission’s current and future capacity to operationalize changes and resource implications related to the use of educational activity sites (e.g., volunteers, staff, site visit logistics, facility, infrastructure, technology); the methods by which other accrediting agencies continuously monitor the use of educational activity sites; requirements of the United States Department of Education (USDE), and policy implications.
The Ad Hoc Committee discussed several key concepts related to the Commission’s use of educational activity sites. First, the Committee noted that CODA’s Predoctoral Review Committee and Dental Public Health Review Committee postponed their discussions related to potential standards involving the use of international educational activity sites. The Committee noted that other disciplines are similarly interested in using international sites to provide educational experiences; however, in Summer 2019 the Commission reaffirmed that international sites are not permitted at this time to provide education related to program goals, objectives or educational requirements, and may not impact program length.

The Committee noted that CODA currently defines educational activity sites as “major,” “minor,” and “supplemental” through its current policy. The Committee engaged in preliminary discussion related to the concepts of site usage, including differences between core instruction and enrichment experiences that may be obtained at sites. The Ad Hoc Committee discussed whether the three (3) current classifications (i.e., major, minor and supplemental) need further development. For example, it was noted that an external site rotation may be minor but could be for a long period of time within the educational continuum. Some sites may be used for clinical experiences while others may be non-clinical or observational. The Ad Hoc Committee believed that the three (3) classifications may not completely and adequately define the various uses of educational activity sites among programs accredited by the Commission, nor provide the level of CODA oversight that may be appropriate based upon specific usage. The Committee believed that the definition of sites should be further examined through the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, with a potential revision to categories.

The Ad Hoc Committee also engaged in lengthy discussion related to the uses of educational sites. The Committee noted that there are a variety of reasons why a program may use educational activity sites. Additionally, the varied disciplines under the Commission’s purview may use educational activity sites for different purposes; it is not a “one size fits all” educational practice. Further, usage of sites may vary by length, experience gained, faculty oversight, assessment of formative and/or summative skills, distance from the program’s main facility, ownership by the program, and the type of site (e.g., community health center, hospital or facility not owned by the sponsoring institution, mission trip sites, etc.). The Committee determined that all of these factors should be carefully considered if the Commission is to develop a protocol to permit use of sites (domestic and/or international) to ensure appropriate Commission oversight of the educational experience.

The Committee noted that further study of the management tools used by other accrediting agencies to permit use of educational activity sites may be of interest to the Commission. The Ad Hoc Committee further discussed whether the Commission itself, or its site visit team as is currently the case, should dictate when a site is reviewed during the regular accreditation site visit to a program. The Committee noted that site visit teams may select some but not all sites to visit during an accreditation visit.

Following lengthy discussion, the Ad Hoc Committee believed it would be important to develop a survey tool to obtain information from programs on the use of educational activity sites. A
small subcommittee of the Ad Hoc Committee was tasked with developing the survey. Additionally, the Committee requested that the CODA staff obtain additional information, including the practices of other accrediting agencies, and additional materials noted in the topical outline of potential data to gather for committee consideration.

**December 6, 2019 Meeting:** Dr. Steven Friedrichsen (Committee chair), Dr. Kevin Haubrick, Dr. William Nelson, Dr. Bruce Rotter, and Dr. Timmothy Schwartz attended the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee. Dr. Susan Kass, Dr. Steven Levy, and Dr. Marshal Titus were unable to attend. Dr. Arthur Chen-Shu Jee, chair, and Dr. Jeffery Hicks, vice chair, Commission on Dental Accreditation, *ex-officio*, were also in attendance. Additionally, Dr. Sherin Tooks, director, CODA, Ms. Michelle Smith, Ms. Jennifer Snow, and Ms. Peggy Soeldner, managers, CODA, were in attendance.

The Ad Hoc Committee initiated its second meeting with a review of the agenda materials that were prepared, which included: 1) the CODA Strategic Plan, 2) the policy on distance education, 3) policies related to educational activity sites, 4) the Guidelines for Reporting and Approval of Educational Activity Sites, 5) the number of CODA-accredited programs and volunteers in each discipline, 6) information on site visit scheduling, site visit length, and cost, 7) the number of special focused site visits for the prior seven (7) years, 8) information from the USDE on clinical site visits, and 9) information from the 2015 Mega Issue Discussion on External Sites.

The Ad Hoc Committee noted CODA’s historic policy on the use of educational activity sites, which required programs to report to CODA on sites that are used for 20% or more of a student’s/resident’s training. It was noted that CODA rescinded the prior policy in lieu of the first version of the current policy in 2010; this revision required all sites to be reported.

Following its 2015 Mega Issue Discussion on External Sites, the Commission defined the categories of site usage and reporting requirements. The Ad Hoc Committee also noted that on-site evaluations of educational activity sites may be less frequent now that site visit teams select sites to be visited. The Committee discussed whether there could be a standardized way to collect appropriate material on the use of sites to allow CODA to monitor sites in accordance with the requirements of the Accreditation Standards. The Committee believed a long-term goal could be a real-time database in which programs must maintain accurate records related to prescribed guidelines and requirements for each site that is used for educational purposes. Nonetheless, a standardized review process was looked upon favorably by the Ad Hoc Committee to create a continuous monitoring mechanism.

The Ad Hoc Committee again noted the vast differences that may exist with each site used by a program. These differences could relate to patient population, quality of the facility, and dilution of educational experiences if multiple programs use the same site. It was noted that there is no current tracking mechanism to identify sites that are used by multiple programs concurrently.

The Committee then focused its discussion on site visits to educational activity sites, noting that visits to program sites may require multiple teams, multiple visitors, and multiple days, depending on the program’s use of sites and each site’s distance from the program.
sites would require additional considerations such as travel visas, confirmation of health and safety precautions, and other nuances as already addressed by CODA’s international accreditation process for dental education programs. Further, the additional cost of visiting sites is a factor that must be further discussed.

The Committee believed that a mandatory survey should be distributed to all dental education programs within CODA’s purview in spring 2020. The Ad Hoc Committee will further develop the survey in Spring 2020. The survey should include special questions that are discipline specific to capture variances between disciplines and use of educational activity sites. Survey questions could include concepts related to: 1) how the site is being used, 2) how much of the curriculum is received at the site, 3) the number of sites and their proximity to the program, 4) the ownership or contractual relationship between sites and the sponsoring institution, 5) the purpose of site affiliation agreements and contracts, 6) how the program ensures an appropriate educational experience at the site, 7) oversight of students at the site (by primary program faculty or site-specific faculty), 8) program resources to manage oversight of sites, 9) site oversight by other agencies (federal, state, or another accrediting agency), 10) the reason sites are chosen, and 11) prospective use of international site locations and the purpose they would serve.

Following lengthy discussion, the Ad Hoc Committee requested that additional information be collected for its next meeting, including: 1) identification of standards related to use of educational activity sites for each discipline under CODA’s purview, 2) policies and procedures of other accrediting agencies related to use of educational activity sites, 3) the number of sites visited compared to the number of program sites used for programs site visited in the prior year, and 4) program changes reported to CODA and actions taken (approve, postpone, deny) related to educational activity sites in the prior 5 years. The Committee also suggested that a mandatory survey be developed for dissemination in Spring 2020.

**Ad Hoc Committee on Educational Activity Sites Recommendation:** This report is informational in nature and no action is required.

**Commission Action:**

Prepared by: Dr. Sherin Tooks