# Outcomes-based assessment: developing program-specific criteria for accreditation

ICEE

Authors: David L. Stanley and Ronald Sterkenburg

Over the years, accreditation has become increasingly important for virtually all programs in engineering and technology. Throughout the decade of the 1990s, however, accreditation came under fire for a number of reasons. Accreditating bodies were criticized for attempting to drive certain agendas that met with a great deal of resistance in higher education. It could be argued that an end result of these arguments was the improvement and evolution of accreditation to a process that relies more on outcomes-based assessment. Increasingly, now, outcomes-based assessment is becoming the accepted philosophy for accreditation in engineering and technology. These changes in accrediting philosophy make it necessary for each specific discipline to undergo in-depth self-examination in order to determine the educational outcomes it considers important for program graduates. Generally speaking, an effort of this type will involve a number of different programs with similar programs and curriculum, working to develop a set of recognized criteria that provides the model then for new programs to follow.

The scope of such an effort may appear daunting, and is indeed a demanding effort and process. Programs that value accreditation based on outcomes, though, will also place great importance on being a part of the original effort to establish the program-specific criteria. In so doing, participants position themselves to establish a leadership role in the study discipline, provide valuable input based on experience, and have an impact on the final product for the accreditation process. This paper will address such an effort from the perspective of an engineering technology program that places great importance on educational outcomes and intends to continue in a position of leadership for engineering technology.