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Using Accreditation to Build Teamwork in a Department

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This interactive and engaging presentation examines the opportunities and methods of using the accreditation process to increase program unity. How to use the central focus of institutionalizing a program to build a community within the team. How to use the requirements of the accrediting body to increase engagement, build excitement for the future, and a way to let go of past grudges.

Creating a healthy team or department extends beyond the responsibility of the chairperson--it must be a collaborative effort. How do you find common ground amongst highly skilled department personnel who are lacking in team unity? Could an accreditation be the secret your department needs to come together?

In this session we will explore the use of the accreditation process as a team building exercise to bring a department together for a stronger working relationship. The Masters of Public Health program at Eastern Washington University was going through a professional accreditation when the process challenged the fabric of the program. With administrative support, a collaboration between staff, faculty and administration resulted in the accreditation of the program and the development of a strong workplace team. This has resulted in higher job satisfaction for all as well as higher productivity and efficiencies.

This presentation will focus in three areas. First, we will discuss how the accreditation process can be used to build teamwork. With the acute nature of an initial accreditation, the accreditation process often mirrors Tuckman's five stages of team development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Second, we will identify ways to tell if the accreditation plan is working and what to do about it if the wheels are coming off. This part of the session will focus on the forming, storming, and norming of the department culture. To be successful in a major project which is developing concurrent to normal academic operations, personal agendas and change issues need to be addressed. The third part of the session will review the accreditation process from the perspective of staff and faculty with a list of do's and don'ts for working with them.

Throughout the presentation, attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions and share experiences of their accreditation experiences with the objective of developing networks for those who are going through the accreditation process.