Kentucky Environmental Education Council (KEEC)
Certification Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
April 17, 2013

Meeting Location: Franklin County Cooperative Extension Office, 101 Lakeview Court, Frankfort, KY
Frankfort, KY

Meeting Time: 9:00 a.m. Eastern

Committee Members in Attendance: Elizabeth Schmitz, Michelle Shane, Henrietta Sheffel, Merin Roseman, Joe Baust, Ginny Lewis, Ashley Hoffman, Melinda Wilder, Billy Bennett, Doug McCoy, Pattie Stivender, April Haight

Other Staff in Attendance: Zachary Myers and Zach Webb

E. Schmitz calls meeting to order with a welcome to the committee and conducts a brief overview of the meeting's agenda.

Committee breaks into small groups to participate in a carousel brainstorming activity of the pros and cons of "nonformal" in the course title, the strengths of the Certification program, and areas for improvement. Below are the transcribed comments that appeared on the carousel sheets.

- **What are the Strengths of the EE Certification Program?**
    - o Residential
    - o Networking
    - o Aligns to Standards (NAAEE)
    - o Inclusive
    - o Instructors
    - o Experiential
    - o Fun
    - o Diversity
    - o Learning Styles
    - o Rigorous
    - o Introduction to Projects: WET, PLT, FLP, WILD, etc.
    - o Foundations of Science
    - o Units of Study
    - o Clarifies "Two Hats"
    - o Strong Code of Ethics

- **Areas for Improvement in the EE Certification Program?**
  - Organization of book/materials
  - Terminology/form consistency
  - Who is the program for/audience
  - Need better connections between activities and how to prepare unit
  - More transparent assessment and review of progress/outcomes
  - Criteria for assessment/mastery learning (re-teaching?)
  - Advocacy?
  - Project certifications – check who needs it and which projects are wanted

- **Reasons to keep "nonformal" in the program's title?**
  - Distinguishes from EE endorsement
  - NAAEE certifies nonformal programs
  - Don't want to confuse certification with other types of more formal certifications like PE, geologist, etc.
  - Informal v. nonformal certification word change
    - What about "Professional EE Certification"?
    - Is "nonformal" confusing – refer to educator or program?
    - Provides an additional certification for teachers
    - "Informal" refers to passive learning without instruction

- **Reasons to remove "nonformal" in the program's title?**
  - Appeals to larger audience
    - Does not exclude teachers or interpreters
  - May be more advantageous in KELP implementation
  - Confusion gone with colloquial definition of "nonformal"
  - Counts a credit toward endorsement
  - Similar to other state EE certification course titles
  - Certification word change

The committee reconvenes from small groups and begins discussion with strengths of EE certification. J. Baust says that it is experiential and provides networking in EE field.

M. Shane says that group projects are helpful to some, but not to others, turning the discussion to areas of improvement; she poses questions of how to accommodate participants in becoming certified in individual Curriculum Projects vs. those that are more experienced without being too redundant. A. Hoffman agrees and proposes non-mandatory additional curriculum for less experienced program participants (i.e. Project curricula workshops with associated extra-curricular fees as needed).

M. Roseman steers conversation to education v. advocacy, saying that those who participate in advocacy are not representative of certification. M. Shane questions M. Roseman and recounts her personal experience as advocate for the Division of Water; she says that there is a clouded distinction between EE and advocacy for those who must advocate a position as a part of their job, and such a

stance creates a possible conflict of interest. J. Baust counters M. Shane, saying that in this example, advocacy for clean water is not an issue as M. Shane was following the letter of the law and using data to illustrate her points.

M. Wilder proposes an EE Certification Review Board made up of EE peers to help review cases that may surface when individuals are using advocacy inappropriately. J. Baust concurs with this idea. Z. Webb suggests a Code of Conduct, which exists in the Code of Ethics. M. Roseman views breaching code as a re-teaching opportunity, and M. Wilder suggests formalizing re-teaching methods, and potential tutoring. M. Shane asks about consequences for those where re-teaching does not help. The consensus is that the few individuals who are unable to understand how to communicate environmental issues in appropriate ways would lose their Certification.

M. Shane asks if there is an online verification network for those who are certified. E. Schmitz confirms that there is a list online at the KEEC Certification website.

The conversation of the pros and cons of "nonformal" in the program name is initiated by M. Shane; she reviews the carousel sheet and offers A. Haight's suggestion to revise the title to include "professional" instead of "nonformal." M. Wilder wants to change "certification" to "training" or "prep." Z. Webb discusses the options with "educator" and "education."

J. Baust says "certification" definition is murky; M. Wilder agrees. A. Hoffman says that NAAEE uses "certification" and asks if committee wants to be the only different state; E. Schmitz agrees.

G. Lewis suggests that both the website and the course binder include a definitions page, much like the Commonwealth of Kentucky has definitions at the beginning of their regulations to clearly define the agreed upon meaning of certain terms; she also suggests adding a flow chart of some sort to explain how interested individuals can move from certification to endorsement, and how these programs differ from certification in the Curriculum projects and Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB). Committee agrees to include a definitions and flow chart sections on the website and in the new binder.

J. Baust dislikes "nonformal." M. Wilder moves to change name to "Professional Environmental Educator Certification." Motion passes and committee breaks.

M. Shane calls meeting back to order and gives a brief presentation on the mission statement. M. Wilder does not like the use of "management" in the statement "best management practices", referring to what graduates are taking from course; she says goals should align with NAAEE standards and a discussion of NAAEE mission and certification accreditation language ensues.

G. Lewis suggests a syllabus for entire program, rather than the current divided structure. M. Wilder supports idea and emphasizes the necessity for broad course goals.

The discussion turns to adult education and additional training for course participants on use of social media as an outreach tool. M. Wilder relates experience with digital learning, agrees that we need to better integrate technology into the course or risk potential alienation of less tech-literate individuals. M. Shane suggests using webinars to educate program participants. M. Wilder thinks webinars are good,

and suggests committee not limit itself to social media, emphasizes digital learning throughout the course. J. Baust believes webinars would be a good source of supplemental professional development. A. Haight says webinars, etc. need to be short in order to hold attention.

E. Schmitz notes a general agreement of the committee to integrate technology in the program, changes conversation to adult education as an additional focus of the course (rather than such a focus on K-12 teaching methods). M. Wilder talks about dilemma that nonformal educators have in helping formal educators understand the environment; J. Baust agrees. M. Shane would like to see more tools to use with adults. D. McCoy says he never looked at adult education as different from K-12 education; A. Hoffman and A. Haight agree. M. Roseman asks what adult education looks like and if the committee can incorporate it a little more. J. Baust says that engaging everybody is a challenge.

M. Shane believes civic engagement should be a bigger part of the program, especially how to address civic leaders and make EE relevant to them. B. Bennett says that materials can be related to different careers and tailored to different situations. M. Shane emphasizes that activities are malleable; G. Lewis agrees.

M. Roseman says that a majority of program graduates work with youth. She questions how to customize course based on needs of class members each year. She suggests incorporating a survey into course application materials. E. Schmitz talks about the importance of demographics and mentions possibly using Survey Monkey. The group agrees that the survey is a good idea but the application process is getting too burdensome with all of these additional requirements, so KEEC needs to find a way to streamline (application + survey + self-assessment is too much, but some of these could be integrated into one thing to be more efficient and less cumbersome).

D. McCoy proposes to put "citizens of all ages throughout the Commonwealth" in the mission statement.

Z. Webb gives a brief impromptu presentation on the layout of the website. M. Wilder says overview needs to be at the top of page. A. Hoffman asks to clarify KAEE as a "network of professionals across the state." J. Baust says the website layout should include answers to the basic questions, "Who, What, Where, When Why, How?"

Committee moves to begin review of application materials.

M. Shane's initial reaction is that it is "too wordy," suggesting materials use bullets, sub-points, etc. M. Wilder wants switch order of "state" and "national." Discussion moves to providing more transparency before the course starts regarding assessment expectations; linking all assessment materials and code of ethics on the website.

E. Schmitz moves to eliminate the Course Participant Expectation document. M. Roseman suggests that this content be included in the course application. M. Wilder would like to see applicants write a few sentences on why they want to participate.

Someone proposed adding the following questions to the application: 1) participant's target audience; 2) their background in the curricular Projects; and 3) their current job or major in school.

When E. Schmitz asks committee to look at application form, A. Hoffman suggests an online application.

Regarding time spent on coursework, J. Baust suggests overview should include "survey of grads indicates estimate of _____;" B. Bennett suggests that 30-60 hours would be an appropriate estimate. Committee agrees to this suggestion.

E. Schmitz announced unilateral change in self-assessment, everybody approved, and says it will be finalized and put on wiki for further input, along with the code of ethics.

Meeting adjourned.