

Council on Naturopathic Medical Education

Board of Directors Videoconference Meeting

Sunday, January 24, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

Call to order and roll call

Dr. Wallace called the meeting to order at 11:36 a.m. ET. The following Board members were present:

- Amanda Alexander, ND, MEd (Profession Member), Mesa, Arizona;
- Brian Andrew, JD, MA (Public Member), Chesterfield, Missouri;
- Arvin Jenab, ND (Profession Member), Costa Mesa, California;
- Joni Olehausen, ND (Profession Member), Dayton, Ohio (board vice president);
- Eileen Stretch, ND (Profession Member), Tucson, Arizona (board secretary);
- Randy Swenson, DC, MHPE (Institutional Member Rep., NUHS), Lombard, Illinois;
- Cynthia Hope, ND Bastyr U. (Institutional Member Rep., Bastyr U.), San Diego, California;
- Susan Tebb, PhD, MSW, C-IAYT, RYT-500 (Public Member), St. Louis, Missouri;
- Marcia Prenguber, ND, FABNO (Inst. Mem. Rep., U. Bridgeport), Bridgeport, Connecticut
- Jamey Wallace, ND (Profession Member), Seattle, Washington (board president); and
- Melissa Woodin, CPA, MBA (Public Member), Kent, Connecticut (board treasurer)

Staff present:

- Daniel Seitz, JD, EdD (executive director), Great Barrington, Massachusetts

Request for additions or other changes to the agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Hearing on initial accreditation of the UAGM ND program

No board members had a conflict of interest in regard to this agenda item.

Dr. Olehausen provided background information on the evaluation visit for initial accreditation of the UAGM ND program and summarized the team findings. There was some preliminary discussion regarding the program.

Next the following representative from UAGM joined the meeting:

- María Del C. Santos Gómez, PhD, Academic Dean, Gurabo Campus, Universidad Ana G. Méndez
- Frank Valentín Silva, MD, Dean, Naturopathic Medicine School.

After introductions, the UAGM representatives provided information to the CNME board and the board had an opportunity to ask questions. Following this portion of the hearing, the representatives left the meeting and the board deliberated regarding a decision on initial accreditation.

Dr. Stretch moved, and Mr. Andrew, JD, MA, seconded, the following motion:

1. **To grant initial accreditation for a period of four years, retroactive to May 2020 (the original expiration date of the candidacy status of the ND program).**
2. **To adopt the commendations, recommendations and areas of interest set forth in the CNME Evaluation Team Report of November 2020, with a few changes (see the addendum to these meeting minutes below for a complete list).**
3. **In accordance with US Department of Education requirements, to conduct a follow-up onsite evaluation visit in late winter or spring of 2022, circumstances permitting.**
4. **To require, prior to the 2022 onsite evaluation visit, submission of an interim report containing detailed information on the following: UAGM's actions to address outstanding recommendations and areas of interest. Of particular interest to the CNME are the steps that UAGM is taking to improve students' NPLEX results and to diversify program faculty.**

The motion was unanimously approved.

Review of substantive change request re BINM-CCNM merger

Dr. Beasleigh recused herself from the meeting due to a conflict of interest. Mr. Andrew, JD, MA, summarized the substantive change request. Dr. Seitz stated that while the CNME does not have a policy on mergers of programs, the CNME policy on branch campuses provides useful guidance for the CNME in evaluating this substantive change application, since in essence CCNM will become an institution with two campuses located remotely from each other.

After discussion and deliberation, Mr. Andrew, JD, MA, moved, and Ms. Woodin, CPA, MBA, seconded, the following motion:

To approve with substantive change request with the following conditions:

1. **To continue the accreditation status of the ND programs offered at both the campus of the former BINM and the campus of CCNM following the merger.**
2. **To deem the merged institution to be a single institution operating a main campus and a branch campus, and to calculate accreditation fees accordingly.**
3. **To require a detailed focused report due October 1, 2021, containing the following:**
 - a. **Information on actual or planned administrative restructuring, if applicable, including information on new and eliminated positions.**
 - b. **The FY 2021 year-end audited financial statement(s) covering both campuses (this can be a preliminary statement) and the merged institution's FY 2022 budget.**
 - c. **Information on any major actual or planned curriculum revisions to the ND programs at either campus.**
4. **To conduct a focused onsite evaluation visit in 2022, circumstances permitting, with the date to be decided in the future (note that, if necessary, the CNME will conduct a virtual focused visit instead).**

The motion was unanimously approved.

Discussion on potential standards revisions re ND program delivery (e.g., telemedicine, extent of allowable online/distance education)

The following guests joined the meeting for this agenda item:

- Iva Lloyd, BScH, BCPP, ND, president of the World Naturopathic Federation
- Shawn O'Reilly, executive director & director of government relations, CAND
- Melanie Henriksen, ND, LAc, CNM, interim president, NUNM
- JoAnn Yanez, ND, executive director, AANMC
- Jessica Mitchell, dean, SCNM School of Naturopathic Medicine
- Fraser Smith, MATD, ND, Professor, Assistant Dean for Naturopathic Medicine, NUHS

- David L. Rule, PhD. Senior Vice President & Provost, Bastyr University
- Bob Bernhardt, Bob Bernhardt PhD, President and CEO, CAND
- Nick De Groot, Dean, CCNM
- Shehab El-Hashemy ND, MBChB, Med, Dean, NUNM College of Naturopathic Medicine
- Joseph Vazquez, Nd, SCNM residency director
- Arianna Staruch, ND, dean, Bastyr U. School of Naturopathic Medicine
- Cheryl C. Miller, MA, EdD, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness / Associate Provost, NUNM
- Shannon Braden, ND, Program Director, Federation of Naturopathic Medicine Regulatory Authorities
- Christa Louise, PhD, Executive Director, NABNE/NPLEX
- David Scotten ND, MEd. Dean of Education, BINM campus
- Laura Farr, Executive Director, American Association of Naturopathic Physicians
- Guru Sandesh Singh Khalsa, ND, AANP board member

Dr. Wallace thanked the many guests in attendance and asked them to introduce themselves. Next, he provided some context for this discussion:

- The discussion is intended to be open-ended. The CNME is interested in hearing from stakeholders on their ideas for possibly revising the CNME standard related to curriculum/program of study (Standard VI) in light of the experience over the past year with online/distance education delivery of ND education, including telehealth.
- Any potential changes will go through a careful development and review process that will allow for ample opportunities to provide feedback.

Dr. Seitz outlined the process for revising accreditation standards and sections within standards:

- Generally, when the CNME thinks there may be a need to revise certain of its standards, the Committee on Standards, Policies and Procedures (COSPP) develops draft revisions for consideration by the full board. Also, the CNME engages in a comprehensive review of its standards every 8 years.
- The full board reviews draft revisions and can either make changes or decide not to move forward with revising the standards.
- If the board decides to move forward with possible revisions, stakeholders are invited to comment on a proposed draft.
- COSPP next reviews all comments received on the proposed draft and may make further revisions, which are presented to the full board for review.
- If the full board signs off on the 2nd set of draft revisions, the draft is circulated for comment for a second time.
- COSPP reviews any comments received during the second comment period and makes final revisions, and then presents the final draft to the board for review, further revision and approval.

The following were among the many points raised by participants in the course of the discussion (note that what is recorded here is neither verbatim nor complete; it is only meant to provide an overview):

- While there are components of ND education that must be done in person, there are also many components that can be effectively delivered online.
- There are certain skills and values important to the naturopathic profession that can only be gained through in-person interaction.
- The public perception of naturopathic medicine, both by potential patients and practitioners in other medical fields, needs to be considered, given that there are still diploma-mill-type programs being offered completely or largely online. It is essential that the ND profession be able to distinguish ourselves from this other group and also be

seen reasonably in line with other licensed/recognized medical fields.

- The medical education landscape has shifted across the full spectrum; all medical/healthcare professions are considering changing their delivery/instructional approaches based on evolving technology, as well as the needs and preferences of students and patients.
- Regardless of whatever direction we go in as educators, the focus must be on outcomes—especially the outcomes that support safe, effective and successful practice; cost-savings (if there are any) is not a sufficient reason to shift to a greater use of online/technology-enhanced approaches.
- Online education is not necessarily of lesser quality; it can, if done right, provide high quality education, while at the same time providing students greater flexibility,
- Generally, there are not dramatic cost-savings associated with online delivery: faculty need to be trained in its use; equipment costs can be high; and there need to be administrative staff who can provide support services for this kind of instruction. In fact, done well, online education may be every bit as expensive as in-person education.
- There may be savings to students in terms of living expenses (e.g., rent), if they can complete part of an ND program without relocating. This, in turn, might broaden the pool of potential students. If more flexible use of online instruction helps students, then it also helps programs.
- During this year when schools have had to deal with limitations due to Covid, they have generally not seen poorer outcomes due to increased use of online instruction.
- Perhaps the increased use of online education could be balanced with an increase the in-person components of clinical training.
- Because of the cost of ND education and the relatively small number of programs, there are geographic and financial barriers to enrolling in an ND program. Diversity of students is also an issue. A more flexible delivery helps to increase access.
- Some sort of socialization process to create a student learning community is important regardless of how ND education is delivered, since that supports better outcomes. Also, its important to get students into the broader community.
- E-learning done right promotes more effective learning than “traditional” classroom lectures; with this model, faculty become learning facilitators/supporters.
- We’ve been using the term “online learning,” which in our field may have a negative connotation. Finding and using the right terminology is essential. It would be better to use terms such as “technology-enhanced learning,” “hybrid learning” and “e-learning.”
- We need to remember that the students currently engaged in graduate professional education may have a different relationship with technology and a different approach to learning. While we need to ensure quality outcomes, we also need to be mindful of learning styles, needs and preferences of current students.
- Creating bonds/community in the first year is very important—not only for emotional support, but also for academic success.
- We make assumptions about the importance of in-person activities for creating community. However, synchronous learning experiences—even if the students are in different locations—may support the creation of community. We need to be open to exploring a variety of ways to build and strengthen community.
- Maybe there’s a way to combine “high tech” with “high touch”. In-person intensives may support this.
- There is a body of research that shows that communication/conversational skills are diminishing with the increasing time spent online. One of the strengths of our medicine is the human engagement aspect; this needs to be strongly cultivated given the trends in the opposite direction.
- A hybrid approach may be the best way to combine in-person with technologically enhanced instruction. Also, the model of problem-based learning, which was

- incorporated into medical education a while back, is important not to lose sight of.
- One of the benefits of the approach that NUNM is interested in trying out (online option for the first year of the program) is that students will have an opportunity to find out whether this is the right profession for them without having to relocate to a new place right away, as many students currently have to do. This may actually support more people coming into our field.
 - Based on our collective experience during the past year, we can identify those subject areas/learning experiences that lend themselves best to online/blended approaches and those that do not. Being clear about this will help us decide on how best to incorporate e-learning.
 - It's hard to say whether offering an online option for the first year will support academic success or may lead to greater attrition due to factors such as isolation. Maybe integrating more clinical experiences early on would balance the isolation of the online experience.
 - The World Naturopathic Federation recommends that at least 60% of ND training be provided in person.
 - The way admissions is conducted may come into play; perhaps there are ways to determine how well prepared an applicant is to successfully complete a major portion of the program online. Different types of students do better with different types of educational models. Students also need to know what, exactly, they are signing on for.
 - Our rationale for any changes should include: maintaining and/or enhancing academic integrity and success.
 - In terms of telemedicine, CNME may need to set an upper bound on how much can be incorporated into an ND program. Also, governmental regulations regarding telemedicine may need to be considered.

Following the discussion, Dr. Wallace thanked the participants again for taking the time to share their perspectives with the CNME. The next step is for COSPP to meet to work on this area; this committee may also reach out with specific questions to its stakeholders. At this point, the guests left the meeting.

Review of NUNM substantive change request option to offer the first year of the ND program online

No board members had a conflict of interest regarding this agenda item.

Dr. Swenson summarized NUNM's substantive change request to offer the first year of the ND program online as an option for some students, and noted that the institution had provided extensive background information and materials in support of its request.

The board engaged in a lengthy discussion regarding the substantive change request. While most board members were generally supportive of the request, provided that the program remains predominantly residential as required by CNME, a few board members cautioned that it might be inadvisable to allow such a major change in how ND programs have traditionally been delivered before the CNME and its stakeholders (most notably the naturopathic educator and practitioner communities) have had a chance to work out more fully the potential complications of a delivery model like this. The question was raised whether the CNME has ever allowed a program to try an innovative approach as a "pilot program"; Dr. Seitz noted that the CNME has not done this in the past, but it's an interesting idea to consider. It was noted that on the plus side, this delivery model might help increase enrollment and decrease the costs associated with attendance, both of which potentially support the success of the profession.

Dr. Stretch moved, and Dr. Tebb, seconded, the following motion:

To approve with substantive change request with the following conditions:

- 1. NUNM must continue to observe the “Guidelines on the Use of Information & Communication Technology in Naturopathic Medical Education” published in the *CNME Handbook of Accreditation*.**
- 2. NUNM must submit an initial focused report by February 28, 2022, with information on the following:**
 - a. Comparative enrollment information for the first-year online and residential cohorts, including numbers of students in each cohort and information on any significant demographic or other differences between the two cohorts;**
 - b. Comparative information on the online and residential cohorts in regard to educational outcomes for the 2021 fall semester; and**
 - c. A description of the steps taken by NUNM to foster a community of learning among the first-year students in the online cohort.**
- 3. NUNM must submit a follow-up focused report by October 1, 2022, with information on the following:**
 - a. Comparative information on the first-year online and residential cohorts in regard to educational outcomes for the first year of the ND program;**
 - b. Comparative information on any significant differences between the two cohorts in such areas as the attrition rate, need for academic support, and satisfaction with the program; and**
 - c. An overall assessment of benefits, drawbacks and success of this delivery approach in comparison to NUNM’s residential approach.**

The motion was approved, with one no vote and one abstention.

Updates and miscellaneous matters

Dr. Wallace thanked board members for their flexibility and availability to attend this special board meeting, and for everyone’s careful preparation for the meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m. ET.

ADDENDUM TO THE MINUTES RE INITIAL ACCREDITATION OF THE UAGM ND PROGRAM

The following is the final list of the commendations, recommendations and areas of interest pertaining to UAGM’s ND program adopted by the board at this meeting:

LIST OF COMMENDATIONS

Commendation: The institution has elevated the status of the ND program by establishing the “School of Naturopathic Medicine” within the recently created Medical Sciences Division.

Commendation: The faculty are dedicated and passionate, and they have succeeded in quickly pivoting to the use of online instructional methods to address the coronavirus situation and other challenges due to island-wide emergencies.

Commendation: The program arranged early on for the faculty to receive extensive training in order to effectively transition to online instruction.

Commendation: In comparison to the previous curriculum, the recently implemented new

curriculum (i) more effectively incorporates and integrates naturopathic theory and philosophy; (ii) more effectively integrates naturopathic modalities; and (iii) has incorporated more measures to prepare students for the NPLEX exam.

Commendation: The faculty and administration have demonstrated openness to feedback on the new curriculum and flexibility in rolling it out to give as many students as possible the benefits it offers.

Commendation: The program has taken a number of steps to create a culture of research. Among other things, there is a strong emphasis on research in the program, including extensive training of students in research methodology and opportunities for students to participate in faculty research projects.

Commendation: The library took a number of steps to effectively accommodate student needs in response to limitations due to the coronavirus situation.

Commendation: The university has built a new, spacious facility to house healthcare-related programs, including the School of Naturopathic Medicine.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation V-1: The program needs to take further steps to strengthen the oversight of online exams to protect against cheating/academic dishonesty. (Std.V.F.1a)

Recommendation VI-1: The program appears to be 20 hours short of meeting the CNME 1,200-hour clinical training requirement. The program must ensure that the curriculum covers the full number of required clinical training hours. (Std.VI.C)

Recommendation VII-1: NPLEX exam results continue to fall below the CNME benchmark. The program must continue to implement steps to improve performance on the NPLEX exam (e.g., curriculum changes, practice exams, tutoring). (Std.VII.B.5)

LIST OF AREAS OF INTEREST

Area of Interest IV-1: There is an overreliance on clinical faculty who are fairly recent naturopathic medicine graduates and who thus have not had a lot of practice experience. (Std.IV.A.3)

Area of Interest IV-2: The NMDP relies strongly on hiring UAGM graduates as program faculty. (Std.IV.A.4)

Area of Interest IV-3: There is a need for greater diversity among the faculty in regard to the range of naturopathic specialties offered by the program. (Std.IV.A.4)

Area of Interest V-1: First-year students reported that they did not have a formal orientation at the start of 2020 – 2021 academic year. (Std.V.A.1)

Area of Interest V-2: The team is concerned that some changes to academic policies are conveyed via email without being formally published (e.g., retention index for the GPA). (Std.V.A.2)

Area of Interest V-3: The team did not see any references to a process for the program to identify academically at-risk students and take appropriate action. (Std.V.E.2)

Area of Interest V-4: Students do not have access to adequate academic tutoring services, which may be one of the factors negatively impacting NPLEX pass rates (e.g., tutoring for A&P). (Std.V.A.1)

Area of Interest VI-1: An excessive number of students were receiving primary and secondary credit on individual patients due to the coronavirus situation. This practice appears to have been discontinued, but should not be resumed. (Std.VI.C.5)

Area of Interest VI-2: It appears that one student's record of having completed the clinical training requirements was incomplete; the program must ensure that records are complete before any student is allowed to graduate. (Std.VI.D.6)

Area of Interest VII-1: The program has established an excessive number of assessment metrics without, it appears, carefully determining which metrics are most useful for purposes of improving the program; as a result, the program is challenged in "closing the loop" in terms of gathering useful information and incorporating it for the purpose of program improvement. (Std.VII.B.3)

Area of Interest IX-1: The team received feedback from students that materials related directly to the ND program (e.g., texts for required courses) are sometimes not readily available through the library. (Std.IX.A)