ASCA School Counselor Education/Preparation Program Standards
Frequently Asked Questions

Why is ASCA developing the national recognition program?
The ASCA School Counselor Preparation Program Standards will establish ASCA as a Specialized Professional Association (SPA) under the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). These standards will codify ASCA principles into the education community. As a SPA, ASCA will review and grant national recognition to qualified school counselor education/preparation programs at institutions of higher education.

ASCA recognizes that school counselors are educators and thus require knowledge and competency in student learning. For example, the CAEP guidelines for SPA programs are grounded in the InTASC principles for teacher standards, including The Learner and Learning, Content, Instructional Practice, and Professional Responsibility. The four principles are founded on strong consensus on critical topics that can be applied across all specialty education areas, including how students learn, child and adolescent development, use of assessment to enhance learning, importance of clinical experiences, and knowledge of standards, curriculum, and assessment-based accountability systems. ASCA believes that “the learner and learning” is a critical component of school counselor education programs. In fact, Standard 1 states: “Candidates demonstrate knowledge of the history of school counseling, and the structure and organization of the American education system. Candidates understand the development trajectories of diverse learners in the school environment.”

How did ASCA develop the standards?
The ASCA Education/Preparation Program (EPP) standards are not new. They were developed for school counseling education programs from the ASCA National Model, ASCA School Counselor Competencies, ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors, ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, and the ASCA Ethics Standards for School Counselor Education Faculty. The ASCA EPP Standards were developed by a committee of school counselor education faculty members, practicing school counselors, district school counseling directors, and state school counseling coordinators. The standards were made available for public comment two times before they were finalized by the committee and submitted to CAEP.

What is the value of pursuing ASCA national recognition?
All colleges and universities that are CAEP or NCATE accredited and offer programs for the preparation of school counselors are invited to participate. Programs receiving the national recognition have affirmed that candidates are prepared to deliver a comprehensive school counseling program and are knowledgeable about the foundations and concepts of school counseling. Graduates of ASCA SPA-recognized schools demonstrate they have met national standards for educators that are recognized and valued by school districts and administrators. In other words, colleges and universities are better able to recruit high-quality students who are drawn to a program that is nationally recognized. Likewise, schools and school districts may look more favorably on applicants who have graduated from a nationally recognized program, demonstrating they are prepared to plan, implement, deliver, and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program.
How does a college/university determine if it should pursue the national recognition?
Only an individual college/university can make this determination. First, review your state licensure requirements to determine if the national recognition is required with CAEP accreditation and what other options may be available. Put simply, either the state requires the SPA or the college/university chooses it. Currently, Alabama, Delaware, Indiana, Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and West Virginia require SPA review of programs in providers seeking CAEP accreditation, if there is a SPA in that area. For details on state agreements, click here: http://www.caepnet.org/~/media/Files/caep/state-partners/program-review-b-state-agreement-7-16.pdf?la=en. All state partnership agreements are available on the CAEP website so you can review your state’s requirements or you can contact CAEP staff directly at 202.223.0077.

How does a program earn the national recognition?
Programs must complete the program review process, providing evidence that they meet each of the ASCA standards. To earn the national recognition, the higher education institution must be CAEP accredited. A university seeking the national recognition must announce their intention to CAEP three years prior to their CAEP accreditation site visit. Two cycles of data are required, so SPA national recognition reports are due one year before the CAEP site visit for CAEP accreditation. To begin the process, a university would “request a shell” from CAEP. This is the document (“program report”) that university will complete online to provide all information associated with SPA review. The report submission and review is conducted entirely online via CAEP’s online system. Program report review occurs in spring and fall of each year. Reports are reviewed by a team of reviewers who have been selected and trained by ASCA consistent with CAEP policies and procedures. [Those interested in applying to serve as a peer reviewer should contact ahickman@schoolcounselor.org.]

To view a sample program report form and instructions, click here: http://www.caepnet.org/accreditation/caep-accreditation/spa-standards-and-report-forms/nasp

How much does CAEP accreditation cost?
Annual fees for CAEP accreditation vary based on the number of completers. For example, a university with 0-50 completers would pay $2,390 annually, while a program with 1,000-plus completers would pay $5,355. Although the SPA recognition process is completely online, CAEP accreditation requires site visits, which cost approximately $11,000-$15,000. Direct questions regarding CAEP accreditation fees to caepfinance@caepnet.org.

Are there extra fees associated with the national recognition via the ASCA SPA?
No. SPA program review is included with any CAEP accreditation fees.

How will ASCA help programs prepare for the national recognition?
ASCA is preparing online resources, including a manual for completing materials, examples of assessments, list of available resources, and sample narratives. ASCA is also preparing training for colleges/universities seeking the national recognition.

How does the ASCA national recognition differ from CACREP?
In addition to standards for school counseling coursework, CACREP standards address faculty requirements, credit-hour and internship requirements, student and faculty evaluation, and other issues relative to the program. The CAEP SPA standards address student knowledge only, recognizing that every community and every program is different. Programs seeking the ASCA national recognition are free to develop programs at their discretion with the goal of ensuring candidates meet the competencies as outlined in the standards rubrics using six to eight assessments.

While the ASCA SPA standards bear some similarities to sections of the CACREP standards, the ASCA standards focus on the essential knowledge and skills necessary to be a successful school counselor. CACREP standards do not address the critical role of a comprehensive school counseling program in serving all students, nor do they fully address the unique role of school counselors distinct from the roles of clinical counselors. ASCA believes school counselors practice counseling and are well-versed in mental health issues; however, they work in an education profession rather than a counseling profession with differences much deeper than the work setting. School counselors’ role as educators does not diminish the importance of school counseling in student mental health and wellness or the need for school counselors to be knowledgeable about mental health issues.
Despite the diverse nature of their work, school counselors are ultimately employed by educational organizations. School systems and their leadership have a foremost focus on the academic success of their students. As an integral part of the education program, school counselors must effectively work within the system, while delivering a data-informed counseling program to support the goal of maximizing student success. This is the foundation of the ASCA SPA standards.