



# TMS volunteer face time



Ron Gibala

## The Face of the ABET Accreditation Process

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I became involved with the TMS Accreditation Committee after complaining to Slade Cargill, the chair at the time, that the committee was not adequately providing Program Evaluators (PEV). I remember Slade's response: "Yes, Ron, you're right. It's because we need more people like you." It occurred to me that I should put up or shut up!

I've maintained my activity with the committee since because I feel I've been able to help many materials and other engineering programs go through the accreditation process and, hopefully, become better because of my involvement. I've done this now for about 15 different universities, either as an individual PEV or as a team chair. Visiting these universities has been very enjoyable, as I see my colleagues operate in their

home environments and observe, first hand, how committed they are to doing their jobs as educators in our undergraduate materials programs.

I also hope my work on the committee and the knowledge it's provided me has been beneficial to my university, at the very least in helping it with the ABET accreditation process. In this respect, I feel that every materials department should have at least one faculty member be an ABET PEV through TMS.

This leads me to the major responsibility of the TMS Accreditation Committee—to provide materials-based, knowledgeable PEVs for ABET accreditation visits that include evaluation of a materials program. The committee recruits new

PEVs, provides training, assigns them to visits, and evaluates their performance. A critical aspect of this process is ensuring that the PEVs are up-to-date with the latest knowledge of the accreditation process. We do this regularly at re-training sessions—which are open to the entire materials community—at the fall Materials Science and Technology conferences and at the winter TMS annual meetings. Attendance at TMS refresher sessions is required for TMS PEVs every two years.

TMS has traditionally been excellent in the initial and ongoing training of its PEVs to prepare and support them for the substantial responsibilities they carry in the accreditation process. To the program being visited, the PEV is the most visible face of ABET and TMS. In a given year, we can have a need for more than 20 PEV visits to materials departments in the United States and abroad, with the international component growing rapidly as more countries seek ABET accreditation for their universities.

Being an ABET PEV through TMS can be a remarkably rewarding professional experience for any member who wants to play an active role in improving engineering education. The ABET criterion-based evaluation process asks programs to define what they want to be, to have a process to achieve that goal, and to demonstrate active achievement. Although numbers and lots of textual detail can be involved in the preparation of a self-study document, the effort is hardly bean-counting—or shouldn't be. And yes, the process might still be imperfect, but who better than materials people to deal with imperfections?

**Ron Gibala is the L.H. and F.E. Van Vlack Professor Emeritus, University of Michigan, and TMS Accreditation Committee Chair.**



## About ABET and TMS

ABET is a nonprofit, non-government organization that accredits college and university programs in engineering and applied science, with more than 680 institutions in 24 countries participating. In 1932, the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers was one of the founding member societies of ABET's originating organization, the Engineers' Council for Professional Development, establishing the legacy of TMS's role as the lead ABET society for the materials, metallurgy, and welding disciplines. Key to fulfilling this responsibility is recruiting and training volunteer Program Evaluators who review program materials, visit campuses, and participate in accreditation decisions. To learn how you can become an ABET Program Evaluator through the TMS Accreditation Committee, contact Mary Samsa, TMS Foundation & Public Affairs Manager at [msamsa@tms.org](mailto:msamsa@tms.org).