

editorial

Eliminate State-Specific Engineering Exams

By W. Gene Corley, Ph.D., P.E., S.E. Member, SEI Board of Governors

Licensure mobility... We are moving forward. Every couple of years or so, NCEES asks Member Board Administrators to complete a survey of their board's licensure laws, procedures, qualifications, and the like. The 2003 survey contains clear examples of the progress the Council has made toward facilitating interstate mobility. However, we must not become relaxed, thinking we have done all we can. The Council must continue to recognize impediments to mobility and work to eliminate them.

A total of 48 engineering boards responded to the 2000 Member Board Survey. Of those, seven indicated that they had a process to expedite licensure by comity. The most lengthy expedited procedure was 30 to 60 days, the second longest was one month, and the third longest was 21 days. Only three boards had expedited comity processes that took two weeks or less. Forty-nine engineering boards responded to the 2003 survey. Of those, 28 indicated that they had expedited comity processes. Three weeks was the longest processing time indicated. The great majority of boards had expedited processes measured in days. Eight boards had procedures that allowed them to process comity applications in three days or less. What an improvement!

The key to the above expedited comity is the designation Model Law Engineer (MLE). All engineering applications submitted to the NCEES Records Program are evaluated to determine if the Record candidates meet qualifications for MLE status. For 28 Member Boards, Record holders designated MLE are eligible for expedited comity. As of October 2003, the Records Program began reviewing all current land surveying Record holders to determine which are qualified for the Model Law Surveyor (MLS) designation. This review will be complete in December. At the 2003 Annual Meeting, the Council's delegate body passed a motion incorporating the definition of Model Law Engineer-Structural (MLE-S) into the Model Rules. With the help of Member Boards, the MLS and MLE-S designations have the potential to expedite the paperwork involved in the comity process.

In spite of the progress we have made, there are impediments to widespread mobility. One of the most significant is the difference in education qualifications required by Member Boards. The Model Rules requires individuals to have an accredited-engineering degree or the equivalent to

be eligible for engineering licensure, but there are still a few states that, under certain circumstances, do not require a degree or accredited degree for licensure. Changing state law is not easy, but it is a worthwhile fight when the end result will facilitate licensure mobility.

State-specific exams are another impediment to comity. Because of the disparity in surveying laws and requirements, state-specific exams for surveying licensure will remain the status quo. For the surveying profession, such exams play an important role in protecting the public. However, there is a much higher degree of commonality in state laws regulating engineering licensure and practice. Instead of creating state-specific engineering exams that impede licensure mobility, Member Boards should work together to eliminate such exams already in existence. For example, many boards require engineering licensure applicants to pass a state law exam. Granted it is important for engineers to know and understand the law in the state where they are practicing, but is requiring a state-specific exam—delaying licensure by comity—the only way to ensure this? Some boards bypass a state-specific law exam by requiring that licensure applicants certify in writing that they have read the law and understand its meaning. Another example is a state-specific exam for structural engineering. The Council developed the Structural I and II exams to facilitate licensure by comity for structural engineers. Likewise, if state boards recognize the need for an exam above Structural II, we should work to develop a third national structural exam rather than impede mobility with individual state-specific exams.

The Council has made great strides in facilitating licensure by comity, but there is still much progress to be made. When all states adopt the same academic requirements for licensure and eliminate state-specific engineering exams, we will be much closer to the ideal of widespread mobility. Let the NCEES Board of Directors know what you think on these issues. With communication and cooperation, the Council will achieve more and more expedited licensure by comity.

Instead of creating state-specific engineering exams that impede licensure mobility, Member Boards should work together to eliminate such exams already in existence. ■

Reprinted, with permission, from the December 2003 issue of the NCEES Newsletter.



EDITORIAL BOARD

Chairman

James DeStefano, P.E.
DeStefano Associates
Fairfield, CT
203-254-7131
jimd@destefanoassociates.com

Executive Editor

Jeanne M. Vogelzang
NCSEA
Chicago, IL
312-372-8035
ncsea@structuremag.org

Members

Craig E. Barnes, P.E., S.E.
CBI Consulting, Inc.
Boston, MA
617-268-8977
cbi1984@aol.com

David Biggs, P.E.
Ryan-Biggs Associates, P.C.
Troy, NY
518-272-6266
dbiggs@ryanbiggs.com

Charles J. Carter, P.E.
American Institute of Steel Construction
Chicago, IL
312-670-5414
carter@aisc.org

Lowell K. Christy, P.E.
Christy/Cobb Inc. Consulting Engineers
Birmingham, AL
205-933-1080
lowell@christycobb.com

John A. Mercer, Jr., P.E.
Mercer Engineering, PC
Minot, ND
701-839-1056
mercer@minot.com

Rawn Nelson, S.E.
R. F. Nelson & Associates,
Structural Engineers
Hermosa Beach, CA
310-937-4846
rawn1@gte.net

Steven Schaefer, P.E.
Steven Schaefer Associates
Cincinnati, OH
513-542-3300
ses@ssastructural.com

Greg Schindler, P.E., S.E.
KPF Consulting Engineers
206-622-5822
gregs@kpf.com

Dennis Tewksbury, P.E.
Dennis Tewksbury Consultant
Concord, NH
603-641-5006
dntewksbury@prodigy.net

Editorials are provided by the leadership and staff of the STRUCTURE Editorial Board, NCSEA, CASE and SEI on a rotational basis.