



## Making the Most of the Findings Letter

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Occasionally, in my career as a Program Director, I have been playfully chided by my faculty for having too much of an affinity for certain accreditation processes. I admit I'm a nerd when it comes to that "time between" receiving the Findings Letter from CoAEMSP and the time in which accreditation recommendation is considered by the CoAEMSP Board.

That "time between" is exciting to me because this is when a program and the Program Director finally receive the first "official" direction of what programmatic changes might be necessary for meeting the CAAHEP *Standards*. The clarity that has been sought for so long finally arrives and can (or should) drive the final push necessary to secure accreditation. The Findings Letter can make a considerable difference in the quality of your program if applied in the right way. My recommendation is that as soon as you receive the Findings Letter, you should meet with your Advisory Council, Medical Director and administration. This team should develop a plan of action that everyone intimately involved with the Program can take to prove that your program is capable of meeting the *Standards*. This plan of action may be something as simple as providing documentation of practices not seen or understood during the site visit. It may be something more complex like developing, implementing, and evaluating a new process of assessing student outcomes.

The key words to employ during the "time between", are 'develop', 'implement' and 'evaluate'. A common mistake made by programs is to approach some issues in the Findings Letter by creating or developing processes or tools that address the issue superficially but fail to provide CoAEMSP with demonstrated data or evidence at the time of consideration. Avoiding this mistake is key to the essence of the Findings Letter. This "time between" is the time to produce the evidence required by the Findings Letter, and ultimately leading to positive programmatic changes.

What's more, programs should not wait until the CoAEMSP Board meets to discuss your program before you jump into action. CoAEMSP wants to see a proactive and effective response to the Findings Letter in order to make a recommendation that positively affects your program.

My experience suggests that when you and those involved in your program actually produce the evidence and demonstrated data required by the Findings Letter in this "time between", it leads to a stronger, more solid program. This can really be a gratifying moment for faculty, staff, advisory members and most importantly, your students. You have to embrace this desire to become the best, however, in order to achieve it.