**Best Practices for COMS**

General

1. Make sure you have time to read all materials before the interviews. Try to work so that issues are brought up in advance of the meeting so problems can be addressed before the candidate is there.
2. It’s best if you can schedule adequate time for the interviews. 1.5 hours for license interviews (45 minute interview, 15 minutes for deliberation, 15 minute callback with candidate; 15 minute buffer period). 2 hours for finalization candidates is ideal.
3. If the COMS requires follow up from a candidate (such as a rewrite), assign one member of the COMS to be the main contact who will be available for questions and will receive the rewrite.
4. Make sure that you are putting your decision in writing to the candidate. Make sure someone is doing this (either conference administrator or COMS member).
5. We highly encourage COMS chairs/members to talk with the conference staff person prior to interviews. They are a great resource and can give valuable background info on candidates. Give them time to brief you about any special circumstances that you might need to be aware of.
6. Best practice from the Central Conference COMS: a COMS member will call candidates prior to the interview and 1) outline expectations; 2) tell them what to bring; 3) ask if they have any questions. This responsibility is divided up between COMS members.

Re: Finalization Candidates

1. The conference interview is supposed to be more rigorous than the Board interview. It is better to address issues at the conference level than push candidates along to the denominational level only to be rejected. The Board interview is supposed to be more of an affirmation.
2. Conference staff should be aware of any candidates who have been granted a rule of exception or an equivalency and should inform the COMS. However, if you are reading a candidate’s materials and have questions about the candidate, feel free to contact OM. We can give you more background.
3. In interviews where you had concerns about the individual, but not enough to delay them, consider writing up a document for them post-interview (and delivering it verbally to them in their callback) which identifies gifts/strengths, but also areas of growth, and then challenge them to address those areas. It creates more accountability, but also holds them to a high standard. We have found that this results in a more meaningful experience for the candidate because they know it is not a “rubber stamp” and that we have expectations of them. Be sure to end it on a hopeful and encouraging note so that there is no confusion about whether they passed or not.

COMS Chair Responsibilities and Best practices

1. Have a better than average understanding of the Rules for the OM and the credentialing categories.
2. Be willing to work closely with conference staff in advance of the meeting to plan schedules and review the candidates. See if there is anyone coming back for a re-interview. Familiarize yourself with the issues and find out what has happened in the interim.
3. Consider reviewing every paper in advance in order to identify potential red flags so that they may be addressed beforehand, if appropriate.
4. Or, consider doing a “skype huddle” a month in advance of the meeting to identify issues and strategize.
5. Be willing to share the load of follow-up with the conference. Example: if a candidate is required to work with a mentor and has significant rewrites to do, work on a follow-up schedule that will help produce the desired results.
6. Make sure that, in cases where re-writes are assigned, that a candidate is very clear on what to work on, and what the COMS expects.
7. Critically evaluate your systems and procedures and work toward improvement. However, do what fits your conference culture.