

# ASPA NEWS

ASSOCIATION OF SPECIALIZED & PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITORS

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION – TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION SUCCESS

JANUARY 2008

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### CHAIR'S REMARKS

*By PAUL GASTON, ASPA BOARD AND TRUSTEES PROFESSOR,  
KENT STATE UNIVERSITY*

In the brief message I prepared for last fall's newsletter, I described events that had taken place earlier in the year, events that had called on ASPA to rise "to a new level of influence." I ventured the view that the voice of the Association had never before been "so prominent—or so effective." Now, as I used to say during my sportscasting days after giving the wrong score, "check that." Indeed, events this fall have called on your association, its leadership, and its members to assert the values of independent, peer-based accreditation even more forcefully and strategically.

Readers of this newsletter do not have to be reminded of the importance of seeking appropriate language in legislation reauthorizing the Higher Education Act. Once the HEA is approved and signed, our community will be living with the result for the foreseeable future. But you should know, if you do not already, that our Executive Director, working with many of you, has contributed

significantly to the mark-up process that is so critical. As I write this message in mid-December, there is at last some reason for optimism that the language of the legislation as eventually passed will protect the most critical elements of accreditors' responsibility and the nature of relationships with institutions and programs. And so I say again, as I did last fall, I am grateful for all the work that has been done and continues to be done to represent the interests of specialized and professional accreditors during a volatile and unpredictable period.

Later this spring, we will have the opportunity later to hear from colleagues who have been most directly involved in this effort. And that is only one good reason to plan on attending ASPA's spring meeting in Chicago. In fact, I believe that you will find the program for the spring meeting unusually coherent and substantive—on both this and other important issues. There has never been a time in ASPA's history when your support and presence have been more important. I look forward to seeing you in the Windy City. U

#### **Register Now:**

**ASPA's Spring 2008 Meeting –  
March 30 & April 1st  
The Allerton Hotel • Chicago, IL  
312-440-1500**

**Book your sleeping room at the Allerton as early as possible. Chicago hotel rooms will be extremely tight over the ASPA meeting dates due to a huge city-wide meeting.**

**Schedules and registration forms also available in the MEETINGS section of  
[www.aspa-usa.org](http://www.aspa-usa.org).  
Click on "Upcoming Events"**

## Policy Briefing Letters

During Spring 2007, ASPA's friend and colleague, Sam Hope wrote a set of eleven policy briefing letters to his four accrediting organizations (Art and Design, Dance, Music and Theatre). He also shared these letters with the ASPA membership for use within the broader accreditation community. Although the letters were written at a specific point in time, they encompass broad principles that are not time-specific.

The eleven briefing letters provide an overview of issues associated with the relationship among institutions of higher education and accrediting organizations. Traditionally, this relationship was conceived and operated on the principle that each entity was independent, and independence was to be especially protected with regard to specific academic decisions.

Proposals generated from the US Department of Education in Spring 2007 challenge this concept of independence. Anticipating this development, Sam Hope's associations asked that he provide analyses that reflected and noted underlying values and principles. The issues and therefore the letters deal with the accreditation system in general, not accreditation in any particular discipline or field. The issues discussed affect every institution.

Letter 1 - Introduction of the issues for the higher education system

Letter 2 - Freedom and independence of institutions of higher education and the accreditation system

Letter 3 - Federal control of academic matters

Letter 4 - Accreditation is important to the freedom and independence of individual institutions and programs

Letter 5 - Results or "outcomes" in higher education and accreditation

Letter 6 - Results or "outcomes" in terms of disciplinary or professional content

Letter 7 - The public interest in higher education

Letter 8 - Public information and accreditation

Letter 9 - Definitions and concepts of student learning

Letter 10 - Sources, natures, and purposes of improvement and innovation in higher education

Letter 11 - Preservation of the fundamental values underlying the work of NASM and the other arts accrediting associations

Queries about the briefing letters may be directed to Mark Marion ([mmarion@arts-accredit.org](mailto:mmarion@arts-accredit.org)). To locate the briefing letters, go to <http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/>, search for "Briefing Letters: Spring 2007," click on the appropriate link and you will see a link to each of the eleven letters. U

## CHANGING ROLES of ACCREDITATION PROFESSIONALS

One of your ASPA colleagues recently noted that her job had changed drastically from what it had been 20 years ago. This prompted another ASPA member to say that the job he accepted just three years ago is totally unlike his job today. As this conversation unfolded, the ASPA Board saw many nods of agreement around the room and thus decided to more fully explore how jobs and roles have changed. This is a first step toward addressing what these new roles might mean in terms of other needs. If your job too has changed over the past decade, what steps have you taken or are you planning to take to be ready for the next decade? Are there times when you feel as if you need a stronger support network to help you face the future more effectively? If your answer to that question is yes, what might ASPA do to offer more support as you look forward to the future?

The ASPA Board asks you to contemplate these questions in preparation for an interactive discussion to be held on Sunday afternoon at the Spring 2008 ASPA meeting in Chicago. See enclosed overview schedule. Board member, Kathy Megivern, CAAHEP: Allied Health, will guide the discussion and will be assisted by a panel of your specialized accreditor peers. U

## THE GLUE THAT HOLDS US TOGETHER

Plan now to join ASPA on Monday morning of the Spring 2008 meeting for a discussion of the "glue" that holds accreditation and accreditors together. What network of shared values and commitments constitutes the "glue"? When is the "glue" important – and when not? To what extent is the recognition of legitimate differences in perspective and priorities part of the "glue"? What better use might we make of the "glue that holds us together?" Will it help us move forward once HEA reauthorization is over? Will it hold as members prepare for recognition under the revised CHEA criteria? The discussion may serve as a stimulus for potential white paper topics and will also include a short "open forum" - still another part of the glue. U

## MEMBER BUSINESS MEETING - ELECTIONS, DUES, AND BYLAWS

Spring is when most of ASPA's annual business is conducted. Elections are held and members of non-elected committees are appointed. The slate prepared by the Nominations Committee for the FY09 elections will be sent to all members at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Members will receive the proposed FY09 budget and dues prior to the meeting and will be able to discuss them prior to Board action.

The ASPA Board anticipates that several amendments to the ASPA *Bylaws* will be circulated to members for

review prior to the meeting. The Bylaws task force has been charged with developing proposed amendments to change one board position from a Chief Staff Officer to a Senior Accreditation Staff position, to amend ASPA's current conflict of interest policy to encompass staff conflicts, and to explore the feasibility of adding a new non-voting category of membership that would be open to those who are not eligible to be voting members. ASPA's *Bylaws* require that proposed amendments be circulated to members at least 30 days prior to the meeting. To be adopted, approval by two-thirds of the voting members in attendance at the meeting is required. u

**Call for Agenda Items:** Contact the ASPA office by mid-February to request that a topic be added to the Spring 2008 meeting agenda.

**Elections:** Materials for the Spring 2008 elections will be mailed to ASPA members prior to the meeting. Elections will be held on Monday, March 31, 2008. Plan to attend. Your vote counts.

**Spring 2008 ProD:** Effective Communication: Tips for Communication Success – see flyer enclosed with this mailing and posted to the ASPA web site - [www.aspa-usa.org](http://www.aspa-usa.org), click on MEETINGS.

## Allied ON BEHALF of YOUR Good HEALTH

By PAUL GASTON, TRUSTEES PROFESSOR, KENT STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Let's assume that you are aspiring to a career in polysomnographic technology. What organization stands behind the quality of accredited programs in your field? If your response is the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, you're right.

(Clueless as to what "polysomnographic technology" may be? Keep reading for the answer.)

CAAHEP has been operating since July, 1994, the result of an October 1992 decision by the American Medical Association to discontinue its own accreditation of allied health education programs in favor of establishing "a free-standing agency" to assume the responsibility. The agency that has emerged is, in fact, a kind of "federation," a coordinating organization embracing sixteen autonomous Committees on Accreditation. Through this federation, the Commission accredits 2000 programs in eighteen disciplines within 1250 institutions, from community colleges and vocational-technical schools to large research universities.

And CAAHEP continues to evolve. Since its founding, four member Committees on Accreditation have

left the Commission to create accrediting bodies of their own: athletic training, health information, ophthalmic medical technology, and physician assisting. But in the same period, six others have joined: kinesiotherapy, exercise sciences, exercise physiology, personal fitness training, polysomnographic technology (more later on this), and surgical assisting.

The Commission's location has also "evolved," from the windy environs of East Wacker Drive in Chicago, its address until two years ago, to a sunny neighborhood in Clearwater, Florida.

The mission of the Commission echoes those of many ASPA member organizations by focusing on ensuring "quality education programs" in its field and on the needs of the professions, institutions, and students it represents. And its process of accreditation follows a familiar sequence. A self-study informs a site visit which yields a report and, in some cases, an institutional response. Within the Commission, the appropriate Committee on Accreditation then takes up the report and response and develops a recommendation for consideration and approval by the Commission board.

Once each year the Commissioners meet, each representing a sponsoring organization or Committee on Accreditation. The 15 members of the Commission board meet more often, face-to-face, quarterly, and periodically by conference call as well.

The Commission's publication, *Communiqué*, links all its members, reports on recent actions, and focuses on issues of general interest. One continuing issue is the name of the Commission's disciplinary area, "allied health." Responses in a recent *Communiqué* range from a perceived need for clearer definition of the term and better marketing to the charge that the term has become "basically meaningless" and should be replaced: "It is time for the term to go."

Kathy Megivern, Esq., who has served as Executive Director of CAAHEP since 1998, operates with a lean staff consisting of an accreditation services director, an executive assistant, and a database manager. Prior to joining CAAHEP, she served for nearly a decade as Executive Director of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, located in Alexandria, Virginia.

Speaking of ASPA, Kathy says, "Most of what I know about best practices in accreditation I learned at ASPA meetings." She also speaks well of ASPA's advocacy efforts at the Federal level, which she believes to be well appreciated also by members of her board.

The responsibility for managing seventeen autonomous accrediting bodies under the umbrella of a single Commission could keep anyone awake, but your correspondent hopes that Executive Director Megivern nevertheless sleeps well when she wishes. If not, she would turn, of course, to a polysomnographic technologist, confident (assuming his or her graduation from an accredited program) of thereby improving her ride to Morningtown. u

## GOT A QUESTION? GET AN ANSWER - FIND IT IN THE ASPA "APD"

Accreditors are always interested in what their peers in other fields are doing. What is the composition of site evaluation teams? How are the evaluators trained? Does one or more staff member participate in visits? Who writes the post-visit report? What is the composition of the decision-making body? Are students included? What about public members? Who votes? The answers to these and many other questions can be found in ASPA's [Accreditation Profile Database \(APD\)](#).

As part of the Fall 2007 meeting, Mary Jane Harris, CAPTE: Physical Therapy, and vice chair, ASPA Board, presented training on how to find information in an Access database. For those who are not experts in Access, many user-friendly features have been programmed into the database. Although an updated APD was rolled out ahead of the September meeting, several new profiles were added following the meeting. A revised APD will be distributed to all participants in Spring 2008. Stay tuned!

**Call for Volunteers:** Although I have written some instructions for using the database, I would like to develop answers to some FAQs: Frequently Asked Questions. If you have been using the APD - or want to start using it - and would like to work with me on this project, please contact the ASPA Office - [cynthia@aspa-usa.org](mailto:cynthia@aspa-usa.org). I am looking for one or two volunteers. u

## WORKING SMARTER by WORKING TOGETHER

Panel members, **David Carter**, SACS: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, **Lynn Priddy**, HLC: Higher Learning Commission, and **Elizabeth Sibolski**, MSA: Middle States Association, joined facilitator **Karen Kershenstein**, KWK Consulting, at the fall 2007 ASPA meeting to discuss ways in which regional and programmatic accreditation reviews can mesh more smoothly to the benefit of institutions.

Panelists noted that regional and specialized accreditors share a mutual goal - to help institutions strengthen the integrity and quality of American higher education. Regional accreditors have a mission-based focus on institutional health and well-being while the focus on mission of specialized accreditors is within the context of a particular discipline or field. Regional site visits are conducted by generalists while specialized reviews are conducted by specialists. Specialized accreditors can count on their regional colleagues to have reviewed an institution to ensure that it has appropriate "systems" in place and that it has the "capacity" to do the work encompassed by its mission. This frees specialized accreditors to focus on the particular program or school rather than overall institution. A lively Q&A session was followed by a round of applause for the panel and facilitator. u

## OTHER FALL 2007 HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to topics addressed separately, the Fall 2007 ASPA meeting in Louisville, KY, also included the following sessions.

- ASPA's Professional Development committee asked attendees to stretch their imaginations as they considered the "**The Science and Art of Decision Making.**" Hand surgeon, Steven McCabe and his colleagues, discussed the theory of utility and probability in making good decisions. Then psychometrician, Donna Surges Tatum, CEO of Meaningful Measurement, covered "Creating Objective Measures from Subjective Observations." The program ended with round table discussions of the session's implications for the work of accreditation.
- In his session, "**Back to the Future: The Many Fronts of Accountability,**" Paul Gaston, Trustees Professor, Kent State University & Chair, ASPA Board of Directors, started with an update of how we got to where we are (or were in September) on HEA reauthorization and other national initiatives before turning to a discussion of where we seem to be heading, and the implications for accreditors.
- Task Force on the Professional Doctorate - TF Chair, Olive Kimball, convened an open meeting during which **Frank Gerbasi** and **Marianne Phelps** (by phone) presented the results of the survey of professional doctorate programs conducted by the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA). The TF then discussed the survey results and developed recommendations that will be forwarded to the ASPA Board.
- Mike Gress, President, AGLS: the Association for General & Liberal Studies, gave an overview of ***Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review.*** See <http://www.bsu.edu/web/agls/docs/AGLSGuide.doc>. Since general education is the foundation of much professional study, ASPA members were pleased to hear about this important initiative.
- The Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions (ASAHP) once again held an invitational meeting prior to the start of the ASPA meeting. This meeting has grown increasingly popular during the past several years. Meeting together has improved communication and understanding between the allied health schools and their accreditors. u

## ASPA GLOSSARY PROJECT: WHAT DO WE CALL IT AND WHAT DO WE MEAN?

Mary Jane Harris, CAPTE: Physical Therapy, and chair of ASPA's Glossary Task Force, spoke about the project's goal of helping accreditors more clearly communicate with the users of accreditation and with each other. Those at the Fall 2007 ASPA meeting worked with Harris on a grid of terms that illustrated both that different terms are used to refer to the same thing and, even more problematic, that the same term is used to refer to different things. For example, the major expectations for a program or school are sometimes referred to as criteria but may also be called standards, competencies, conditions, or requirements. In other cases, criteria are the sub-expectations or explanations (also called guidelines, indicators or interpretations). Another example is the term interim report which often means a standard mid-cycle report that all programs submit, but which can also be used to describe the report that programs submit to demonstrate compliance with a standard.

The raw data gathered during the Fall meeting will serve as the basis for a survey to determine the most frequent and least common uses of terms. Stay tuned for future reports. U

## LOOKING AHEAD TO Fall '08: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NEW ORLEANS

Two-topic professional development program is in the works for the Fall ASPA Meeting in New Orleans, September 7-9, 2008. Emergency Preparedness will be the focus on Monday afternoon, followed by Board Development on Tuesday morning.

**Emergency Preparedness:** Our colleagues will share how their organizations address emergency preparedness in their accreditation standards and what their experiences have been working with programs disrupted by natural disasters or other emergencies. Table discussion will follow.

**Board Development:** We will hear approaches and techniques to orienting new board members and will have an opportunity to participate in activities designed to develop board members and consider ways individual agencies might improve their new board member training programs.

Members of the planning team for the Fall Professional Development program are Greg Boyer, ACPE: Pharmacy; Karen O'Brien, ALA: Library & Information Studies; Amy Rowe (arowe@abhes.org), ABHES: Health Education Schools; and Leslie Winter, JRCERT: Radiologic Technology. We welcome your questions, comments, and offers to participate in what we think will be a program the ASPA membership will find interesting and timely. U

## NEW ORLEANS UPDATE

By PAUL GASTON, TRUSTEES PROFESSOR, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

No doubt about it. Hurricane Katrina, with the assistance of inadequate advance planning, poor decision making, and a vulnerable infrastructure, did a number on New Orleans. Even today, more than two years later, the neighborhoods most severely affected are still struggling to recover. As a native of Louisiana who grew up just across the lake from the City, I have visited there several times since Katrina. While I have avoided taking the "misery tour" through the most severely affected areas, I have a fairly clear impression as to just how much remains to be done. New Orleans continues to need—and to deserve—our support.

Fortunately, as we support New Orleans by having ASPA's Fall meeting there next September, we can also have lots of fun. The French Quarter, where ASPA will hold its meeting, emerged relatively unscathed from the post-Katrina flooding. The early settlers who built the quarter knew to focus on the higher land near the river! The bars in the Quarter, most of them, anyway, never closed. The great restaurants reopened almost at once following the hurricane. The hotels have been doing great business. And the antique shops, the bookstores, the coffee stands, and the jazz clubs are back at full strength. A personal plug: there is not now, nor has there ever been, a better place to eat an oyster than the Acme Oyster Bar!

At its fall meeting, ASPA will join the other organizations that have enabled their members to combine business, pleasure, and a commitment to the restoration of a great city. Arrive early, if you can, or stay for a few days following the meeting. Take the time to rediscover the pleasure of a leisurely *café au lait* at the Morning Call. Stroll through Jackson Square to the St. Louis Cathedral. Check out the antiques on Royal Street. Make time to hear the jazz musicians at Preservation Hall. Consider having a mint julep in the courtyard at Pat O'Brien's. Make reservations for dinner at Arnaud's, Antoine's, or Brennan's, or resolve to stand in the line for Galatoire's. (Wear loosely fitting clothing.) By having a great time, you will be helping those who are working hard to help themselves. See you in New Orleans. *Laissez les bons temps rouler!* U

**Save The Date:**  
**Fall 2008 - September 7-9th**  
**Hotel Monteleone**  
**New Orleans, LA**  
**[www.hotelmonteleone.com](http://www.hotelmonteleone.com)**  
**See enclosed hotel brochure.**

## ASPA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

By KATHY MEGIVERN, ASPA BOARD AND CAAHEP: Allied Health

ASPA has always been the voice of specialized accreditation, but in 2007 that voice became even stronger. We saw it through increased and more visible advocacy efforts in Washington, DC and we saw it with the growth from 51 to 56 members. These new members reflect the diversity that is a hallmark of ASPA – representing fields so different from each other, some large, some small, three are truly new to ASPA while two have been members in the past and are returning. And all of them are unified in their commitment to ASPA’s *Code of Good Practice*.

We welcome the following new members:

**Audiology:** The Accreditation Commission for Audiology Education (ACAE) is the “youngest” of our new members. ACAE was established in 2003 to accredit programs throughout the United States and Canada that offer the Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.). Their mission is “to serve the public by establishing, maintaining and applying standards to ensure the academic quality and continuous improvement of audiology education that reflect the evolving practice of audiology.”

**English Language:** The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) was founded in 1999. Their primary focus is the accreditation of English language programs and institutions. CEA’s mission is “to promote excellence in the field of English language teaching and administration through accreditation... CEA achieves its mission by using widely-held standards to foster continuous program development through a rigorous process of regular self-assessment and peer evaluation.”

**Health-System Pharmacists:** The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) is the 30,000 member national professional association that represents pharmacists who practice in hospitals, health maintenance organizations, long-term care facilities, home care and other components of health care systems. ASHP implements the accreditation process, conducted by the Accreditation Services Division, that accredits education programs for pharmacy technician training as well as post-graduate pharmacy residency training programs. Their mission is “to implement a program of accreditation for pharmacy residencies and pharmacy technician training programs that will improve the quality of patient care provided by pharmacists in health systems.”

And we welcome back the following two agencies:

**Dietetics:** The Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE) is a long-established accrediting body. They were first recognized as an accrediting agency by the

US Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1974 – but their efforts go all the way back to 1924 when the American Dietetics Association’s Education Committee first set minimum standards for preparing dietitians. CADE accredits more than 500 programs and is recognized by both CHEA and the US Department of Education. CADE’s mission is “to serve the public by ensuring the quality and continued improvement of dietetics education that reflects the evolving practice of dietetics.”

**Interior Design:** Established in 1970, the Council for Interior Design Accreditation was formerly known as the Foundation for Interior Design Education Research or FIDER. In January 2006, the organization’s name was officially changed from FIDER to the Council for Interior Design Accreditation in order to explicitly communicate its primary mission: accreditation. There are nearly 150 accredited interior design programs serving an estimated 20,000 students. Through their process of program self-evaluation and peer review, CIDA accreditation promotes achievement of high academic standards, while making education more responsive to student and societal needs.

There is strength in numbers – and with the challenges facing accreditation in 2008 that old saying has never been truer. We are delighted to welcome these five agencies to ASPA’s numbers! U

### Join ASPA Now!

Applications for membership in ASPA may be submitted on:

February 15

April 15

August 1

October 1

See “MEMBER INFO” on the ASPA website and contact Cynthia Davenport for advice.



### HOW TO CONTACT ASPA

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