

# ASPANA NEWS

ASSOCIATION OF SPECIALIZED & PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITORS

## THE SCIENCE AND ART OF DECISION MAKING

July 2007

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### CHAIR'S REMARKS

*By PAUL GASTON, TRUSTEES PROFESSOR, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY; CHAIR, ASPANA BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

Dear ASPANA Colleagues:

This spring, under the capable leadership of board chair Mary Jane Harris and that of executive director Cynthia Davenport, ASPANA rose to a new level of influence. Faced with the Department of Education's efforts to negotiate regulations in the absence of authorizing legislation, ASPANA has convened discussions, coordinated representation at hearings, weighed in on proposed draft language, and, above all, made reliable information available to those most in need of it. Particularly notable has been the Association's close partnering with colleagues in other concerned organizations such as CHEA and ACE. I doubt that the voice of the Association has ever been so prominent—or so effective.

As I begin my term as chair of ASPANA, 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 this volatile and unpredictable period. Much lies ahead, of course. The Higher Education Act remains unfinished business, as you know, and the legislative path towards reauthorization now appears likely to incorporate many of the points of debate raised through the neg-reg discussions. Opportunities to weigh in should continue to emerge, and the Association will continue to speak for its members.

In one other related event, I represented ASPANA in early June at a small gathering in Washington convened by the Teagle Foundation and AAC&U (Association of American Colleges and Universities). The purpose of the meeting was to consider how, beyond the immediate issues of the current neg-reg and HEA debates, higher education might in time

Applications for membership in ASPANA may be submitted on February 15, April 15, August 1 or October 1.

See "MEMBER INFO" on the ASPANA website or contact Cynthia Davenport for advice.

move beyond reaction and responsiveness so as to develop and pursue genuinely qualitative initiatives. What such initiatives might be is not yet clear, but I would suggest that among them should be the celebration of our broadly shared commitment to educational effectiveness. No organization stands more clearly than ASPA for documented high quality in specialized and professional programs.

While events in Washington deserve the focus they are receiving, they are not the Association's sole concern, of course. Planning is well under way to assure a fall meeting in Louisville that is substantive, stimulating, and useful. In the spirit of the city's signature product, the "Louisville Slugger," your board of directors believes that this meeting will be a "hit." See you in Kentucky! u

## DEAR ASPA COLLEAGUES

*BY MARY JANE HARRIS, CAPTE: PHYSICAL THERAPY  
VICE-CHAIR, ASPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

It is hard to believe that this is my sixth message to you. As I have in previous messages, I'd like to offer a brief summary of our activities over the past six months. I think it's fair to say that these six months have been significantly consumed with ASPA's activities in the legislative arena. Addressing the many issues that have arisen related to negotiated rulemaking, the actions of NACIQI, and reauthorization of the Higher Education Act has been a high priority for ASPA and has required considerable time and effort by the members of the External Recognition Issues Committee (ERIC) and by our Executive Director, Cynthia Davenport. While we could probably count the number of meetings, conference calls, email messages, letters and drafts of proposed language during this time, doing so would be a fruitless effort. Suffice it to say that we have devoted considerable attention to the issue. Despite this, numerous other ASPA activities have continued: we had another successful ASPA meeting in March, the Board of Directors has met to do both short and long term planning, and several ASPA appointed groups have continued to work on their assigned tasks.

As this is my last message to you, I'd like to take this occasion to thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you over the past three years as Chair of the ASPA Board of Directors. It's fairly common to hear people say at the completion of their service to an organization that they have received more than they gave and I have often wondered if that were really true or just an apt cliché. Well, I'm here to tell you that it's not a cliché. Despite the

considerable work attached to being Chair of the ASPA Board, it is a job that I would recommend...for many reasons:

- \* It has provided me with the chance to get to know many of you in ways that I wouldn't have otherwise.
- \* It has broadened my perspective about the variety of specialized accreditation and accreditors and enhanced my respect for the good work that we all do and the good intentions with which we do it.
- \* It has also allowed me to be a part of the national dialog about accreditation's place in the world of higher education and heightened my appreciation for those who have gone before us and in whose footsteps we tread.
- \* I have had the pleasure of working with the Board of Directors who are committed to maintaining an effective and efficient organization that meets your needs and to charting a course into the future that will assure ASPA's continuing viability and enhance specialized accreditation's role in the higher education community.
- \* I have had the gratification of seeing ASPA move onto the national scene by taking a number of stands on issues critical to maintaining the fundamental nature and quality of the work we do.

So, it has been worth it to me...it is my hope that it has been worth it to you and to ASPA.

I look forward to continuing my service to ASPA in the capacity of Vice-Chair. There is still much to be accomplished. I know that under Paul Gaston's leadership ASPA will continue to grow and develop. u

## KATHLEEN MEGIVERN JOINS ASPA BOARD

During the Spring 2007 elections, Kathy Megivern (CAAHEP: Allied Health) was elected to be one of four accreditor members on the ASPA Board of Directors. Kathy has been involved with ASPA ever since she was selected to be the Executive Director of CAAHEP in July 1998. She had spent the previous 16 years as Executive Director of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired in Alexandria, VA. That organization managed a certification program and one of its divisions had a program whereby they "recognized" university programs that trained orientation and mobility specialists.

Before moving to Chicago for the CAAHEP job, Kathy had lived in the Washington, DC area for 26 years. While working for the American Council of

the Blind, she attended Catholic University's Columbus School of Law at night. She graduated in 1979 and passed the D.C. Bar Examination. In 1980 she met her husband-to-be, Jim Mecklenburger (via a personal ad in *Washingtonian Magazine!*). They were married in 1986. Their "blended family" consisted of one cat (Kathy's) and two children (Jim's).

In 2005 the CAAHEP Board of Directors determined that there was no need to remain located in downtown Chicago and began a search for a new location where they could purchase a small building. Kathy and Jim lobbied for warmer climes and eventually a location in Clearwater, Florida was chosen. They made the move in October 2005 and are very much enjoying life on Florida's "left coast." They've become major baseball fans (although Kathy says that rooting for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays is even more heartbreaking than being a Cubs fan!). Kathy is looking forward to continuing to serve ASPA in her new role as a member of the board. u

## **Spring 2007 - DISTANCE LEARNING AND SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE: THE FUTURE IS NOW**

*By Ulric Chung, ACPE: PHARMACY*

How does an accreditation review of education provided at a distance differ from a review of an on-campus learning experience? What do regulators expect of agencies that accredit distance education programs? What is expected of on-site evaluators when they review programs offered online? If the educational content is the same, does the method of delivery matter? What about change – and how do different agencies define "substantive change?" These questions (and many others) were asked, answered, and discussed during ASPA's Spring 2007 professional development program in Arlington, Virginia.

The highly interactive sessions were facilitated by Marty Sharpe, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Assessment at Old Dominion University. Panel discussions included recognition agencies, accrediting agency staff, and on-site evaluation team members. These sessions were complemented by group discussions, group scenarios, and a "share fair" table containing loads of informative sample agency policies and procedures on distance learning and substantive change. Rave reviews were received from conference attendees on all sessions, who felt the topics were very relevant to current issues faced by their agencies.

Note: Ulric Chung is a new member of Spring Professional Development Sub-committee. u

## **HIGHLIGHTS - SPRING 2007 ASPA MEETING Reauthorization - Where we've been, Where we're headed, and What does this mean for Accreditors?**

ASPA Board member Paul Gaston, Kent State University, set the stage for a lively discussion with distinguished panelists who offered assorted perspectives on the current state of national affairs related to accreditation. Panel members included:

- \* Jan Friis, Vice President for Government Affairs, CHEA: the Council for Higher Education Accreditation,
- \* Becky Timmons, Assistant Vice President, Government Relations, ACE: American Council on Education,
- \* Joanne Greathouse, CEO, JRCERT: Radiologic Technology and then interim chair of ASPA's External Recognition Issues Committee (ERIC)
- \* Judy Sherman, Senior Congressional Lobbyist, American Dental Association.

**"Let's Talk"** - Vickie Schray, Senior Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education, joined us for an interactive "town hall" session. Although Ms. Schray characterized the session as "very polite," the passion and concern behind many of the questions was evident. Great concern was expressed about the Department's going forward with negotiated rulemaking (Neg Reg) on accreditation in the absence of any change in the law. This is especially problematic given that reauthorization of the Higher Education Act is still in progress and Neg Reg will need to occur again once reauthorization is completed.

**Legislative Advocacy 101** - Brittany McCarthy, Director of Federal Relations, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, worked on the Hill prior to her recent move to AASCU. She spoke about what is and isn't effective during advocacy meetings with Congressional staff members and those they serve. u

## **NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING ON ACCREDITATION**

*By Betty Horton and Susan Zlotlow*

The U.S. Department of Education announced in the *Federal Register* on January 30, 2007 that it had created a new committee to deal with issues of accreditation using a process of negotiated rule-making. Federal agencies use this process to work with outside groups to develop or change regulatory language that implements law. The Secretary called for negotiated rule-making committees on four issues including one on the accreditation section of the

Higher Education Act. Nominations for members of the committee had been submitted earlier by ASPA. As a result, Betty Horton, past Chair of ASPA, was selected as the Negotiator and Susan Zlotlow, Chair of ERIC, was selected as the Alternate. Both Betty and Susan actively participated in four meetings over a four month period beginning on February 7, 2007 and ending on June 1, 2007. Although there were three scheduled meetings of three days each, an additional session was added at the end of session three. In total, there were 10 days of face-to-face negotiations during this time, supplemented by conference calls.

ASPA's negotiators participated in crafting proposed language and forming alliances on common issues with other non-federal negotiators. Among topics provided for changes in the rules governing accreditation were measures of student achievement, consideration of mission in application of standards, monitoring of institutions by accrediting organizations, substantive change, due process, transfer of credit, record keeping and confidentiality, scope of recognition, and the role of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) in reviewing accreditors for federal recognition. Throughout the debates, ASPA's negotiators adhered to a set of principles that were presented to the committee during its first meeting as "Test Questions for Proposals to Change Regulations." The ASPA negotiators requested that the negotiated rule making committee use these questions when considering a change from the current regulations. For example, one test question was for the committee to consider whether a proposed change was allowable under current law.

No general consensus was reached between the federal and non-federal negotiators on the issues presented by the Department. As a result, at the end of the last session the Department stated that during June or July it would publish its own regulations but would use some input from negotiated rulemaking. However, following Congressional statements about the inappropriateness of proposing new regulations while both the House and Senate were engaged in reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), Secretary Spellings announced that she had decided not to issue proposed regulations at this time.

Members of ASPA's External Recognition Issues Committee (ERIC) have been working with representatives of other accrediting organizations to monitor the status of the HEA Reauthorization and the activities of the Department. After reauthorization is completed, another round of negotiated rule making will begin.

## THE AGLS GUIDE

By JOHN NICHOLS, PROFESSOR of Philosophy AND Religion, SAINT JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

First, expand the acronym and the title! The Association for General and Liberal Studies in 2006 published *Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Program Review and Assessment*. The "centerfold" (pages 4-5) in the booklet presents a series of questions calculated to lead an institution through a thorough review of the learning that is expected, and actually occurs, in its general education program.

The *Guide* came together out of three noteworthy sources. (1) The question format itself was inspired by the Higher Learning Commission's AQIP method of promoting quality. AGLS labeled its four categories of questions: institutional choices, action steps, informed judgments (results), and further improvements. (2) Each of the questions has references and supporting material from the literature on general education and from the published standards of regional and specialized accreditors relative to "best practice" in general education. (3) Finally, the "reality test." The questions were submitted to two panels made up of directors and coordinators of general education programs from the national AGLS membership. The panels revised the questions several times, so they would speak to the real situations of institutions.

The *Guide* is, therefore, comprehensive, flexible, state-of-the-art, and in touch with realities. See the AGLS Web site for more information, especially about a workshop on the use of this *Guide* at the October 2007 AGLS conference [[www.agls.org](http://www.agls.org)].

Note: Copies of the AGLS Guide will be available to those who register for the Fall 2007 ASPA meeting on a first-come, first-served basis. Register early to ensure you receive a copy. u

**Register Now: ASPA's Fall 2007 Meeting  
September 9-11<sup>th</sup>**

**The Brown Hotel in Louisville, KY  
Schedules and registration forms also  
available in the MEETINGS section of**

**[www.aspa-usa.org](http://www.aspa-usa.org).**

**Click on "Upcoming Events"**

## FROM SMOKE SIGNALS TO INSTANT MESSAGING, TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION SUCCESS

By *GRETCHEN WARNER, MACIE: MONTESSORI*

**P**lans for the Spring 2008 ASPA Professional Development Program are underway. Effective communication is essential to an accrediting agency's overall success. Regardless of whether that communication is internal to the agency or between the agency and volunteers, institutions, programs, the government or the general public; the complexity of our activities results in few agencies having flawless communication or communication strategies. Human communication by its very nature is imperfect; nevertheless, agencies can take specific steps to understand their particular communication problems and resolve them.

This professional development session will cover principles of effective communication as they apply to common issues faced by accrediting agencies using expert-lead presentations and discussions of effective communication practices with supporting materials from peer agencies. Activities will enable attendees to identify communication challenges facing their own agency and to develop realistic strategies to address those challenges.

In developing this program, the committee is considering topics such as: how communication has changed in recent decades and where it may be headed in the future; how to effectively communicate with our communities of interest, tailoring our messages to specific audiences; and how to accomplish the goals of accreditation by increasing the responsiveness of our communities of interest.

This program will be presented at the Spring meeting in Chicago on March 31 and April 1, 2008. The Professional Development committee hopes that all participants will leave the session with new insights and tools to enable them to communicate intended messages in order to yield optimal responses and outcomes.

Note: Gretchen Warner is also a member of Spring Professional Development Sub-committee. u

## A PENETRATING LOOK AT ACUPUNCTURE ACCREDITATION - ACAOM PROFILE

By *PAUL GASTON*

**E**xecutive Director Dort Bigg has heard all the lines. As the writer for this series of association and commission profiles, I had to needle him for the necessary information. But I promised in return a penetrating report. (He regards my humor as less than piercing.)

Such banter, while graciously received, should not obscure what the Accreditation Commission for

Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine has accomplished. Operating continuously since 1982, ACAOM has supported an unprecedented growth in the influence, deployment, and prominence of the disciplines for which it provides oversight.

Located in the Maryland Trade Center in Greenbelt, MD, ACAOM accredits 51 "established acupuncture and Oriental Medical schools and colleges" offering both degree programs and programs providing instruction for entry-level practitioners. Another 12 programs are in "pre-accredited" status. Since an expansion of its mandate in 1992, such programs include not only acupuncture, but also programs in Oriental medicine, including herbal studies, manual therapy, diet counseling, and exercise/breathing therapy.

In addition to its accrediting authority, ACAOM has taken a lead role in improving the educational and research standards of its disciplines. Indeed, in the light of a compelling mission statement, the Commission seeks "to foster excellence in acupuncture and Oriental medicine through the implementation of accreditation standards." Moreover, the Commission encourages the continued growth and improvement of its disciplines "through continuous self-study and assessment," and, by so doing, provides qualitative assurances to the public and within the higher education community. The Commission also offers technical assistance to developing institutions and programs as it encourages diversity and innovation "within the boundaries of generally accepted standards and guidelines."

Currently, the Commission is offering leadership and guidance as programs in acupuncture and Oriental medicine may move to the first-professional doctoral level—a direction that could prompt an expansion of ACAOM's scope of recognition with the Department of Education. Since 2004, a Doctoral Task Force has been working to clarify professional competencies germane to accreditation standards for doctoral programs. The Task Force has recently taken on the additional assignment of proposing protocols for the possible migration of programs to the doctoral level.

The leadership structure of the Commission changed in 1996, with the appointment of its first—and, so far, only—Executive Director, Dort Bigg. Composed of eleven Commissioners (three practitioners, three institutional members, three public members, and two "at large" members), the Commission meets twice a year for reviews and may schedule, in addition, a retreat to consider policies and engage in strategic planning.

A charter member of ASPA, the Commission has found in the Association "a source of vital information relative to educational, government and

public policy issues.” ASPA also provides, according to Executive Director Bigg, “a unique opportunity to network with accreditation peers and gain perspectives to improve our agency with respect to best practices in accreditation.”

One of those “best practices” was once tested by an ACAOM member institution. Surmising that the annual reports from its program might not receive page-by-page review, the member institution included in its submission an excerpt from *Playboy* concerning “Outdoor Girls.” Dutifully, ACAOM proceeded to seek clarification from the institution regarding the relevance of Hugh Hefner’s contribution to an annual report on an Oriental medicine program. Because Executive Director Bigg is an “Outdoor” type himself, an avid runner, swimmer, and cyclist, we can imagine that he enjoyed offering the push-back. u

## THE SCIENCE AND ART OF DECISION MAKING

The Fall 2007 ASPA Professional Development program will explore the science and the art of decision making. Knowing that every accrediting agency strives to make sound accreditation decisions, ASPA's Fall Professional Development sub-committee has planned a program that will engage participants in interactive group activities to help us understand the various aspects of decision making. Those attending the meeting will be invited to complete an exercise prior to the meeting. If you participate in the exercise, you will receive customized feedback during the session which will be a benefit as you make professional and personal decisions. Steven McCabe, a hand surgeon and a faculty member at the School of Public Health and Information Sciences at the University of Louisville, and Donna Surges Tatum, founder and CEO of Meaningful Measurement, Inc., will lead our discussions. See enclosed flyer for additional information about this not-to-be-missed program. u

## DO YOU SPEAK “ACRONYM”?

By CYNTHIA DAVENPORT, ASPA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Many fields have their own language, which often includes an “Alphabet Soup” of letters that represent a common short-hand for ideas or names of organizations important to the field. The world of accreditation is no different. More than one person at the Spring 2007 meeting noted a difficulty with acronyms during some of the sessions.

To partially address this request, the Fall 2007 meeting materials will include a list of accreditation acronyms that we anticipate may be used during the

meeting. If you are doing a presentation or a report, plan to use acronyms, and wish to have them included on the list, please contact the ASPA office by the end of July or as soon as possible. New acronyms will be added to the searchable glossary that is part of the ASPA website. If there are certain accreditation-related acronyms that you’ve looked up repeatedly in order to be absolutely sure what they stand for, please submit them for inclusion in the glossary.

Creation of the Acronym list was first announced in the July 2003 issue of ASPA News. All issues of ASPA News are posted to the ASPA web site - [www.aspa-usa.org](http://www.aspa-usa.org); click on the NEWSLETTERS button on the left. The list is located in the RESOURCES section. It is the fifth item in “Other ASPA Documents”. u

## CALL FOR AGENDA ITEMS

Contact the ASPA office or a member of the board of directors by July 31 or earlier to request that a topic be added to the Spring 2007 meeting agenda. Members may submit topics for the closed Members Only meeting on Sunday afternoon, September 9, or the open Member Business meeting on Monday morning, September 10.

A draft agenda will be circulated closer to the meeting, but you can expect it to include a report on the FY08 supplemental funds. The Board discussed use of the funds at its planning meeting in early May and will be communicating with members as soon as the amount received is determined.

In a related action, the Board determined that new applicants who apply and are accepted into ASPA membership during the next two years will be exempt from the supplemental assessment for FY08 and FY09. u



## HOW TO CONTACT ASPA

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