

ASPA NEWS

ASSOCIATION of SPECIALIZED & PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITORS

ASPA: GROWING, CHANGING, COMMITTED TO PRINCIPLES

JANUARY 2009

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CHAIR'S REMARKS

By PETER H. VLASES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ACPE: PHARMACY

As of our September 2008 meeting, ASPA has grown to a new high of 60 members, up from 51 members just two short years ago. Undoubtedly, ASPA's reputation as a quality organization, committed to the needs of its members, including the professional development of members' staffs, has had something to do with this remarkable growth. However, environmental changes, such as the recent reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and related negotiated rulemaking, have also increased the need for specialized accreditors to stand together, be counted, and speak with a collective voice. Moreover, the fact that the press and others who view accreditation with little understanding of the role of specialized

and professional accreditation continue to raise concerns nationally about the quality and economics of higher education, further underscores the need for ASPA members to work together for the common good.

The need to chart a clear course for ASPA in these times of marked growth, turbulence in higher education, and growing demands on ASPA staff resources is well understood by the Board of Directors. So, an entire day (Sunday) of the Spring 2009 ASPA meeting (March 29-31, at the L'Enfant Plaza in Washington, DC) will be devoted to a members-only strategic planning session. Paul L. Gaston, Trustees Professor, Kent State University and Past Chair of the ASPA Board will facilitate the session. Paul has surveyed members for ideas and concerns regarding ASPA's future. He will use this information to focus our discussion at the planning session. The Board's hope is that the process of strategic planning will further bond ASPA's members, both new and established, around how ASPA can best serve their needs and speak for them in the public domain.

During our September 2008 meeting, the External Recognition Issues Committee (ERIC) organized an excellent session entitled "What We Have Learned; Why It's Important", which focused on the lessons learned in the past several years as the Higher Education Act was debated and reconsidered. An important part of this session and the discussion that followed was a reaffirmation of the *ASPA Member Code of Good Practice*, the *ASPA Code of Good Practice for a National Service/Oversight Organization*, and the *ASPA Principles for Reviewing Policy and Legislative Proposals Regarding Specialized and Professional Accreditation*. These principles, found on the ASPA web site (<http://www.aspa-usa.org> – click on RESOURCES), will continue to guide ASPA well as it focuses its attention on new policy and regulatory challenges and as it speaks as the one unified voice representing specialized and professional accreditors. In times of dramatic growth and change, knowing the principles on which ASPA members stand provides a firm foundation from which opportunities for greater advancement can be embraced. *

Fall 2008 ASPA Meeting Highlights

A Calm Between The Storms - Gustav, Hanna, Ike - Everyone at the Fall 2008 ASPA meeting knew these names. Just days prior the meeting, the Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans was evacuated because of hurricane Gustav. Although the hotel was open for business by the time most out-of-towners arrived, Gustav had a huge impact on the state of Louisiana and some of our invited local participants were unable to attend. Likewise, hurricane Hanna caused travel challenges and we were all glad to be headed home before hurricane Ike got close to land. In spite of weather-related issues, the meeting was productive and highly rated. Here are few highlights.

Three New Members - Based on the ASPA Membership Committee's review of applications and positive recommendation, the ASPA Board accepted these three groups into membership, bringing ASPA's total number of members to 60.

- CAATE: Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education
- ECADA: Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation of the National Association for the Education of Young Children
- FEPAC: Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences

Accreditation Showcase - Anthony Aramburo, Jan Nishimura, and Matthew O'Hara, commissioners for the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE), a new accrediting organization and a recent member of ASPA, offered a short presentation (verbal and signed) that covered some basic information about CCIE. After 20 years of planning, CCIE was formed two years ago and has now accredited its first program out of a pool of about 150 programs. CCIE thanked ASPA for all they have learned from attending meetings even prior to becoming a member. Information about CCIE is at: www.ccie-accreditation.org.

The Higher Education Landscape: Current and Future - Doug Lederman, Editor, *Inside Higher Education*; Becky Timmons, Assistant Vice President for Government Relations, ACE: The American Council on Education; and Loren Blanchard, Xavier University of Louisiana addressed the higher education "landscape" question from the perspectives of the press, higher education associations, and institutions. Dr. Blanchard also spoke about implications for states in the absence of Dr. Sally Clausen, Commissioner of Higher Education, Louisiana Board of Regents, who was attending to state issues resulting from hurricane Gustav and thus unable to attend.

Lederman said that the good news was that higher education was being seen and valued. He expects the pressure on colleges to deliver high quality education at a reasonable cost to continue and predicted that we will see increased competition among institutions in a tough fiscal environment. In response to a question, Lederman said that

it is hard to know what employers really want from higher education - a primary focus on skills or an education that leads to thoughtful people.

Timmons said that the 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act differed from any of the four earlier ones she'd been involved in. The influence of think tanks with narrow political agendas replaced bi-partisan efforts and put higher education on the defensive. We need, she said, to be able to tell our own story better. Timmons believes that the future will be about costs (i.e., prices), access, stature with the rest of the world, and congruence as it relates to transfer of credit.

Blanchard cited four issues that currently impact higher education and will continue to do so in the future. Student access (with a decreased state population following hurricane Katrina, it has been a challenge to increase enrollment); need for less competition and more collaboration; the cost of education as measured against the value of education; and the need for universities to be more prepared for emergencies and unexpected events. Given the events of the preceding days, Blanchard said that Xavier's "readiness" had just been tested by the weather but that unexpected events such as violence make it important to be as ready as possible at all times.

Legal Issues in Accreditation - Doug Carlson, Chicago accreditation attorney and partner at Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon, used information gathered in a survey of ASPA members to focus his discussion on the types of legal issues accreditors are currently facing. Carlson addressed due process / procedural fairness; challenges to decisions (appeals); complaints from students; subpoena of records by third parties; and governance issues. He also responded to questions.

Professional Development -

The Part 1 topic of the 2 part ProD program was **Crises: Preparation, Response, Management**. Kudos go to the Fall ProD planning team and facilitator, Paul Gaston, for their on-the-fly design of a substitute program when one-by-one the invited local speakers indicated their inability to attend the session. Small groups discussed what systems and processes accrediting organization should have in place for themselves and what they ask their accredited programs to have in place. As ASPA looks to the future, comments about what ASPA might do to support information sharing on these topics will be factored into the discussion.

Developing New Members of the Board, part 2 of the program, started with facilitator Paul Gaston providing a brief overview of several priorities in effective board member development. The list was expanded and then discussed in small groups whose charge was to focus on a single question related to their chosen priority: in what ways might this priority be most effectively accomplished?

Reports of these discussions were used to generate a brochure, "Developing New Members of the Board: A Digest of Best Practices," which is enclosed with this mailing and also posted in the RESOURCES section of the ASPA web site - www.aspa-usa.org. *

TOM LEONHARDT JOINS ASPA BOARD

Although he is not new to ASPA meetings, effective with the Fall 2008 meeting, Thomas W. Leonhardt (Tom) is serving as the “practitioner” member of the ASPA Board of Directors. Tom is director of the Scarborough-Phillips Library, St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. He received his B.A. in German and his M.L.S. from the University of California, Berkeley.

Tom began his library career at Stanford University more than thirty-five years ago. In 2001 he established the library at the International University Bremen (now Jacob University Bremen) in Bremen, Germany. He is a past president of the Library and Information Technology Association (LITA) and a former editor of the LITA journal, *Information Technology and Libraries (ITAL)*. He served on the ALA Committee on Accreditation (COA) from 2004 – 2008 and chaired the committee 2005 – 2007. Also, Tom has published over fifty articles and reviews, speaks frequently at conferences and workshops and is the editor of five books, the most recent of which is *Handbook of Electronic and Digital Acquisitions* (Haworth Press, 2006).

Tom and his wife Maggie (retired) have four children and three grandchildren living in Oregon. Tom's hobbies are writing and music (trumpet, guitar, and mandolin). While a trumpet player in the 84th U.S. Army Band in Fulda, West Germany, Tom became interested in folk guitar and got a friend to show him some chords. He bought a guitar while on vacation in Spain and continued to learn chords and practice in civilian life even while playing trumpet in various community orchestras and brass ensembles. When Tom grew bored with simple three-chord folk tunes, he expanded his guitar interests and chord progressions to include classical, blue grass, and folk and now has three guitars and a mandolin. Tom claims to be “strictly amateur” but says he intends to look for a folk/blue grass group to play with when he retires to Oregon. Welcome to the ASPA Board, Tom! *

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY: LIVING LIFE TO ITS FULLEST

By PAUL GASTON, TRUSTEES PROFESSOR, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

If you hear the word “therapist,” the word you think of next may not be “independence.” But independence for individuals is precisely the goal of occupational therapists. As their professional organization indicates, “Occupational therapy is skilled treatment that helps individuals achieve independence in all facets of their lives.” Such therapy works to get beyond disability or limitations, creating ways for individuals to live life to its fullest, no matter what.

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE), which operates under the auspices of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA),

pursues the important task of assuring that academic programs prepare individuals well-qualified to support individuals in their quest for independence. Located in Bethesda, Maryland, ACOTE traces its lineage as far back as 1923, when AOTA, only six years after its founding, accepted responsibility for accrediting OT programs and began the development of basic educational standards.

In 1935, AOTA's cooperative relationship with the American Medical Association (AMA) paid dividends in the form of an important document, “Essentials of an Acceptable School of Occupational Therapy.” And in 1958, AOTA's commitment to the profession broadened further, with its acceptance of responsibility for programs developed to educate occupational therapy assistants.

The next important step occurred in 1994, when what had been a committee for accreditation within AOTA achieved its own measure of “independence” as ACOTE, a self-governing accrediting agency autonomous from the “umbrella” accrediting agency, the Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation (CAHEA) of the AMA.

Of course, AOTA's broad aims—advancement of “the quality, availability, use, and support of occupational therapy through standard-setting, advocacy, education, and research on behalf of its members and the public,” remain important priorities for accreditation as well, and ACOTE pursues them through its work with 128 occupational therapy assistant programs, 142 occupational therapy master's level programs, and five doctoral programs. All across the U.S., from the University of Puerto Rico to the University of Washington, you will find occupational therapy programs and the positive influence of their accreditor, ACOTE, at work.

ACOTE governance is provided by a 20-member board that combines 17 therapists and assistants, representing both education and practice, two public members, and one higher education administrator. The board, which convenes three times a year, boasts an enviably “clean” record with regard to recognition reviews by both the US Department of Education and CHEA.

ACOTE's chief staff officer, Neil Harvison, PhD, OTR/L, has been at the helm as Director of Accreditation and Academic Affairs since 2006. Neil grew up in Australia and received his baccalaureate in occupational therapy at the University of Queensland. He moved to New York in 1988 and received his PhD from New York University in 2005. Neil telecommutes full-time from his home in New Milford, Connecticut.

Sue Graves, Assistant Director of Accreditation for AOTA, observes that “ASPA has been invaluable for providing both network opportunities with other accreditors and great ideas to use in continuous improvement of the accreditation process.” A former sports car racing driver, she has now retired from motorsports, but her “continuous improvement” in that competitive field led to over 200 trophies—real trophies, that is, not speeding tickets—in autocross, road rally, and road racing.

Call ACOTE the “fast track” to quality in occupational therapy education, and you've got the checkered flag. *

ERIC Talks - WHAT WE LEARNED; Why it's Important*

It is no surprise that ASPA places great value on the way higher education works in the United States. Our system supports freedom at the academic and institutional levels, diversity of educational content and process, and a healthy relationship among institutions, accreditors, and government, each with different roles, each sector doing what it does best. The fundamental concepts and structures of this system have made significant contributions to our nation and the world. The fundamentals have great value.

Entities such as institutions and programs, accreditors, the states, the US Department of Education (USDE), and The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) each have a role in the US system. All work in relationship with others, and yet the independence of each is critical. To continue the system of higher education in the US that creates the most value, all the entities involved need to work together in ways that respect a fundamental principle of balance: neither independence nor relationship must be allowed to cancel the other. With this in mind, here are four basic questions that many people cannot answer accurately:

1. What, by law, is the role of the US Secretary of Education? To administer the programs of USDE. No more. No less. The secretary is not a Minister of Education. The Secretary is not in charge of education and cannot take on processes or responsibilities beyond those authorized in the law.

2. What power does the Secretary have to determine whether an accrediting organization can engage in accreditation? None. The Secretary has no power to either authorize or prohibit accrediting organization actions. The Secretary can only recognize accreditation organizations which meet various eligibility and other criteria of the law. Recognition is not imposed on accrediting organizations; they must voluntarily choose to seek federal recognition. The Secretary has no power over whether an accreditor accredits an institution, only over whether to recognize the accreditation as enabling the institution to participate in Title IV or other federal funding programs.

3. What federal gate-keeping or accreditation functions does CHEA have? None and none. CHEA represents the interests of institutions in accreditation and recognizes those accrediting organizations that volunteer to be reviewed and that meet the CHEA eligibility and recognition criteria.

4. Who determines the standards for higher educational institutions?

- a. Accreditors?
- b. Institutions?
- c. Programs?
- d. Faculty?

They all do. Standards-setting becomes more detailed at each level. However, USDE is prohibited by law from setting educational standards. CHEA also does not set educational standards.

Over the past five years, ASPA's External Recognition Issues Committee (ERIC) has worked with

other accreditors (both regional and national), The American Council on Education (ACE), The National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), CHEA, other higher education organizations, the USDE, and congressional staff. We've worked in various settings, including meetings on the hill, common-position development, and negotiated rulemaking. While engaged in those discussions, ERIC was consistently guided by our stated underlying assumptions and values. Most of these were approved by ASPA as a whole and are available on the ASPA web site. These documents state our collective belief about what is necessary in order for the whole system to function effectively.

Although the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), signed into law in August 2008, does include some troubling elements, it also includes the strongest protections for the independence of institutions and accrediting organizations - and the balance between them - that have been written into law since the Department of Education was created. In 1972, limits were set by Congress on the Authority of the Secretary and the Department of Education (20 USC Sec. 1232a) and, in 1979 when Congress created the US Department of Education, protection for the rights of State and local governments and public and private educational institutions in the areas of educational policies and administration of programs was clearly stated (20 USC Sec. 3403 (a) and (b)). Now, with the action taken in 2008, the HEOA specifically protects the right of institutions to establish standards of performance and the right of accreditors to establish accreditation review standards. It also prohibits federal or other intervention in such matters. These rights remain essential to the success of the American system of higher education, protecting the freedom of institutions to make academic decisions.

As this newsletter goes to print in January 2009, the most important issues before the accreditation community are 1) planning for the forthcoming negotiated rule making panel on accreditation (Neg Reg); 2) providing input on the formation of the new National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI); and 3) establishing good relationships with the new administration, especially new appointees for higher education in the Department of Education. As we focus on these priorities, it is critically important not to minimize the important accreditation achievements in the HEOA legislation. Accreditors have made significant changes over the years to address public confidence and, working together, are committed to a future that includes strategic communications designed to build better public understanding of what we do.

* During the New Orleans meeting, members of ERIC spoke about what enables ASPA to act on behalf of the members, lessons learned during HEA reauthorization and what will be useful as we move - once again - toward negotiated rule-making. Please contact the ASPA office if you'd like to have the handout from that session which includes the 1972 and 1979 Congressional language. Documents that address ASPA's fundamental principles are posted in the RESOURCES section of the web site. [This summary was written by Cynthia Davenport.]

HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN CREATE VALUE AND ACHIEVE EFFICIENCIES OVER TIME - SPRING 2009 PROD PROGRAM

How has technology changed the way accreditation agencies conduct their business? What challenges have agencies faced in implementing new technology? What solutions have accrediting agencies used to successfully address technology related challenges? For answers to these and other questions, plan on attending the Spring 2009 ASPA Professional Development (ProD) session on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning, March 30-31. The program will include the following:

- “*Why is Technology Useful?*” - Ed Meachen, Chief Information Officer, University of Wisconsin System
- “*Technology: Options, Uses and Costs?*” - Structured Open Discussion
- “*How to Develop and Implement Applications*” - Panel plus Q&A
- “*Implementing Technology – Case Studies*” - Group Activity

Planners of the ProD program have also created an opportunity for you to meet with several accreditation software vendors by attending the Monday evening reception (5:00-7:00pm). Although the vendors were screened and invited to participate by your ProD colleagues, the invitation does not imply any endorsement of vendors or products by ASPA.

For more information, see the ProD enclosure in this mailing or go to www.aspa-usa.org and click on MEETINGS. *

KEEPING ASPA BUSY

- **ASPA Compensation & Benefits Survey** - Back by popular demand in 2009, specialized accreditors will be invited to participate in the survey conducted at three-year intervals. Specialized accretor chief staff officers will soon receive information by e-mail on how to complete the survey on-line. This worked very well when the survey was conducted in 2006. Results should be available for all those who participate by late March or early April.
- **Update of Profiles in the Accreditation Profile Database (APD)** - Specialized accreditors who have completed profiles for inclusion in the APD will be asked to update the information this spring. If your specialized accrediting organization has not completed a profile and you wish to submit one so that you too will have access to this valuable resource, please contact the ASPA office.
- **ASPA Statement on Professional Doctorates** - this statement offers guidance when professional doctorates are being developed in non-traditional settings. It also points out the need for institutions to discuss and clarify certain expectations early in the developmental process. The statement was distributed to national, regional and

specialized accreditors, the US Department of Education, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the Council of Graduate Schools, the Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions, as well as to other higher education organizations.

- **Notice of Accreditation Actions** – In order to receive reports of accreditation actions electronically rather than in a paper form, The Higher Learning Commission has set up a special mailbox [accreditingactions@hlcommission.org]. The mailbox is ready for use starting January 1, 2009. Upon request, the HLC will also send their list of actions in an electronic format to any group that is not already receiving it that way.
- **“What Does INQAAHE Offer You?”** - see enclosure and go to the INQAAHE web site: www.inqaahe.org. As Carol Bobby, former chair of the ASPA Board and the newest member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education Board would tell you, INQAAHE always welcomes new members. Carol is the first board member to represent specialized and professional accreditation / QA review organizations.
- **HEOA Negotiated Rulemaking** - The longest HEA reauthorization in history ended when the Higher Education Opportunity Act was signed into law on August 14, 2008. The December 31, 2008 issue of *The Federal Register* included a notice of the Department of Education’s intent to form several negotiated rulemaking (neg reg) committees, including one for accreditation. ASPA and other interested communities will be submitting names and qualifications for individuals to participate in the neg reg process.
- **A New NACIQI** - The National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity was dissolved when the HEOA was signed into law. The law provides for a new NACIQI, with a different appointment process and structure, to be formed no earlier than January 31, 2009. Interested communities are nominating qualified individuals for consideration as outlined in the new law. The Department of Education will also be issuing a call for nominees. *

Call for Agenda Items:

Contact the ASPA office or a member of the board of directors by mid-February to request that a topic be added to the Spring 2009 meeting agenda.

Elections:

Materials for the Spring 2009 elections will be mailed to ASPA members prior to the meeting. Elections will be held during the member business meeting on Monday, March 30, 2009. Plan to attend. Your vote is important.



DC IN THE SPRING – Apple Blossoms AND ASPA

Your calendars may already be marked for the Spring 2009 ASPA meeting on March 29-31 at the L'Enfant Plaza hotel, 480 L'Enfant Plaza, SW; Washington, DC 20024 - www.lenfantplazahotel.com.

As always, both members and non-members are welcome to attend the Spring meeting. However, please note that all day Sunday, March 29, will be reserved for members-only strategic planning. Non-member accreditors and others with an interest in accreditation are welcome to join us for the Monday - Tuesday portion of the meeting.

Monday morning, March 30:

“Brainstorming the Future: Doing What We Do BETTER” – ASPA Board members, **Rodney A. Erickson**, Executive Vice President and Provost, The Penn State University, **Pauletta Brown Bracy**, Associate Professor and Director of University Accreditation, North Carolina Central University, and **Peter H. Vlases**, Executive Director, Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education will set the stage for an interactive discussion that includes topics such as:

- If you were starting with a blank page, how would you design an accreditation review system?
- What do institutions/programs want and need from accreditors?
- What should accreditors consider about how institutions “do business”?
- How can institutional/program concerns be addressed without compromising the quality assurance role of accreditation?
- Will current economic concerns impact accreditation reviews? Why? How?

For additional information, see the overview schedule enclosed with this mailing or go to “Upcoming Events” in the MEETINGS portion of the ASPA web site. *

Register Now:

**ASPA's
Spring 2009 Meeting
March 29-31, 2009
L'Enfant Plaza Hotel
Washington, DC**

**Schedules and registration
forms are also available
in the MEETINGS section of
www.aspa-usa.org.**

**Click on
“Upcoming Events”**

HOW TO CONTACT ASPA

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

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