

ASPA News - January 2003

Issue Theme: "Good Accreditation Practice: Consistency Without Hobgoblins"

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Chair's Comments

By: Olive M. Kimball, NAACLS: Clinical Laboratory Sciences; Chair, ASPA Board of Directors

As I prepare my comments for this issue of *ASPA News*, we are in the final days of 2002, a year of both challenges and significant accomplishments for ASPA. At the same time we are about to take on the challenges of a new year. The year 2003 will mark the 10th anniversary of ASPA's birth and will bring with it its own opportunities for accomplishments as well as for celebration.

Closing out 2002, it was with unusual pleasure that I attended the December meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI). These meetings are generally very informative. However, two and a half to three continuous days of learned dialog between NACIQI members, Department of Education analysts and accrediting agency staff and volunteers may be daunting to some. The meetings are enhanced at times with invited presentations and I believe this meeting was so enhanced by ASPA's Executive Director who, as we know, regularly attends and carefully reports on the meetings as a service to ASPA members.

At the December meeting Cynthia Davenport was invited to present an overall history of ASPA, to describe its purposes, and to delineate some of the issues which it is addressing. She discussed the seminal importance of the ASPA-member *Code of Good Practice* to the development of the organization.

She also expanded on ASPA's unique role in providing a forum for accreditors to define common values and work together to enhance the quality of education and accreditation.

Cynthia also delivered a general invitation to the committee and to USDE staff to participate in the spring 2003 ASPA meeting in Alexandria, VA. She noted that the professional development session will focus on the issue of consistency and how accrediting agencies assure that by means of their policies and procedures. She noted that both Dr. Robert C. Andringa (NACIQI Chair) and Dr. John Barth (Chief, Accrediting Agency Evaluation for USDE) had attended the fall 2002 ASPA meeting and hoped they would be able to join us in Alexandria.

When asked what recommendations for improvements to NACIQI practices ASPA members might have, Cynthia responded that the topic of the spring meeting was one influencing all who engaged in processes of evaluation. The committee invited ASPA to draft thoughts on issues of particular importance to specialized accreditation that might arise during the reauthorization hearings and to share them with the committee early in the new year.

The ASPA presentation was followed by comments from Sandra Elman who represented the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions and by Roger Williams representing the Council of Recognized National Accrediting Agencies. It was very clear from the ensuing discussions that ASPA is a significant and respected component in this arena and there was discussion about and general approval of the apparent increased cooperation between the regionals and ASPA.

It seemed to me that there was also increased interest on the part of the committee to understand the backgrounds of accrediting agency staff and volunteers. At this meeting they were all asked to provide for the committee a brief statement of their educational and experiential backgrounds. It soon became very obvious that there was significant expertise at the tables and that accreditation staff and volunteers provide a wealth of leadership in the diverse fields.

I came away from this meeting with great pride in being part of ASPA and with the certainty that ASPA has continued to grow in stature and in development of new alliances. There is much broader recognition within the higher education community about what ASPA is all about than there was even a few short years ago. Our Executive Director, in her dedicated and professional way, has contributed greatly to this. Once again at the NACIQI meeting she served us well.

As we go into 2003 with increased expectations for ASPA's expanded role within the accreditation community, we are finalizing plans for the spring meeting in Alexandria. We hope this meeting will not only be useful to ASPA members but will also be of interest to the Department of Education staff. In addition, plans are underway for our very special fall birthday celebration in Scottsdale and that meeting promises to be an exciting one.

Do be sure that your calendars are marked for both of these events. As always, your input to planning committees and the Board is invited, appreciated and necessary to ASPA's success.

Best wishes for 2003! May you have a peaceful and joyful year.

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ASPA Motto and Mission

"Enhancing quality in higher education through specialized and professional accreditation."

ASPA's new motto, reviewed by the members and adopted by the Board at the Fall 2002 meeting, is now in use. It is included in the "signature block" for all ASPA e-mail and has been incorporated into the re-designed web site: www.aspa-usa.org.

The Board revised a draft ASPA mission statement based on member feedback and circulated it to the members for review and comment in early November. If you have not seen the statement or have additional comments on the second draft, please contact the ASPA office during January 2003. The Board anticipates adopting the revised mission statement during the Spring 2003 business meeting on Monday, March 31.

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Fall 2002 ASPA Meeting - Other Highlights

The Ritz-Carlton, Cleveland was the site of ASPA's Fall 2002 meeting, held Sunday - Tuesday, September 8-10. The meeting theme was "Good Accreditation Practice: Issues of Autonomy." In addition to those mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, the following topics or activities were included.

- The ASPA Board of Directors met with committee chairs to discuss how the work of each committee fits into the goals and direction set by ASPA's Strategic Plan. The Board first held this "planning" meeting with committee chairs in Fall 2001. Because it seems useful, committee chairs should plan for a similar session at the Fall 2003 meeting.
- Two new members of ASPA presented information about their accreditation operations in the always popular Accreditation Showcase. Gretchen Warner and Martha Sharpe spoke about **MACTE: the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education**, while Frank Murray discussed **TEAC: the Teacher Education Accreditation Council**.
- ASPA Professional Development Committee planned a practical and highly interactive program on the topic, **Threats to Autonomy: Keeping 800 Pound Gorillas in Their Cages**. Guest speaker and former accreditor, Virginia Nieland, set the stage for the

Monday afternoon session by presenting the "History of Autonomy Issues." Autonomy Issues and the Recognition Process included comments on the federal recognition process by John W. Barth, Director, Accreditation and State Liaison, US Department of Education (ED) and Robert C. Andringa, President of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities and chair of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), and comments on the non-governmental process by Judith Watkins, Vice President for Accreditation Services, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and Mac Detmer, member of CHEA's Committee on Recognition. Perhaps the highlight of the afternoon was a debate on the proposition: Resolved: "Best Practice in Specialized Accreditation Requires Total Autonomy of the Accrediting Body." The Tuesday morning program focused on the nuts and bolts issues faced by accreditors as they address issues related to Structural Autonomy (Finances, Organizational Structure, Board Composition, etc.) and Functional Autonomy (Setting Standards, Decision making, Appeals, etc.).

- **"Collaboration in 21st Century Liberal Education"** - AAC&U sponsored a luncheon for those who stayed on Tuesday afternoon for the special add-on session which presented the results of a two-year project that included input from regional and specialized accreditors. John Nichols, professor of philosophy at Saint Joseph's College and project director for AAC&U's Project on Accreditation & Assessment (PAA), presented "The PAA Outputs." **Marge Jackman**, CCNE: Nursing, then discussed "How accreditors (and site visit teams) handle integrated liberal education and professional outcomes" and Tom Zlatic, Professor of English at St. Louis College of Pharmacy, included many practical tips in "How faculty can handle integration of outcomes."

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Fall 2002 Keynote Speech: Autonomy and Integrity

Steven D. Crow, Executive Director, Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of North Central Association, was ASPA's keynote speaker at the Fall 2002 ASPA meeting on Monday, September 9. His thought-provoking speech, "Autonomy and Integrity in the Era of Collaboration and Cooperation," became a point of reference during the rest of the meeting.

Crow said that the HLC had recently concluded a year-long, highly participative project with the terse statement that our business would be "serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning." "Serving the common good" is distinctly different from "serving our membership" or "serving higher education" or even "serving students." He went on to offer some thoughts about the most repeated question he was hearing from colleges and universities, i.e., "who defines 'the common good'?" and the role of accrediting bodies both in relation to autonomy and integrity. Crow concluded his speech by listing some important ways in which he believes accreditors can operate with integrity.

To read the full text of Dr. Crow's speech, go to the RESOURCES section of the ASPA web site:

[\(Crow's Speech\)](#)

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Looking Toward Spring

Enclosed with this mailing you will find registration forms for the ASPA Spring 2003 meeting which will be held at the Hilton Alexandria Old Town, Alexandria, VA from Sunday - Tuesday, March 30 - April 1. ASPA rotates the spring meeting between the DC area and Chicago to make it easier for more local accreditors to attend the professional development session, if not the full meeting.

Here are some reasons to register early for the spring meeting:

- Professional Development: “Ensuring Consistency Without being Rigid” (all day Tuesday)
- Special Guest Speaker: James T. Rogers, Executive Director, SACS: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools - “The Commission on College Peer Review Process - Where We’re Headed” (Monday)
- “Getting to Know Robert, Or, Finding Yourself in Meetings That Are Positive and Productive” - ASPA Board member, Paul Gaston, Provost, Kent State University (Sunday afternoon)
- Local Color, including the possibility of Cherry Blossoms - I’ve been told to expect lots of tourists at this time of year, so book your hotel room early rather than late!

Members should note that Monday’s business meeting schedule has been adjusted as follows:

- Member Dialogue with the Board
- Committee and Informational Reports
- Membership Meeting with Member Elections - if possible, all members should plan to attend this meeting, which is also open to guests.
- Board of Directors Meeting - this meeting will be held at the same time as a networking session. Members and guests may observe the board meeting, which will be an open meeting, or may network with their peers in another room. Holding the board meeting later in the day will allow full discussion of issues by the members prior to any action by the board.

Members who register by March 3 will again receive an “early bird” discount. Sets of meeting materials will be ordered based on the number of registrations received by March 7.

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Ensuring Consistency in the Accreditation Process

- How do accreditors ensure consistency at the decision making level, with site reviewers, and with staff?
- Can case studies and other tools be used successfully to train decision makers, site reviewers, and staff?
- How can accreditors remain flexible while maintaining consistency?

To discover the answers to these questions and much more, plan on attending the ASPA's spring 2003 meeting. The professional development session will be held on Tuesday, April 1, 2003 in Alexandria, VA.

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ASPA Serves Members

There would be little reason for ASPA to exist if it did not provide a service to its members. During 2002, ASPA was proactive in supporting the principle of confidentiality of accreditation records, closely monitored a number of legal issues and represented members in other ways.

- **First**, ASPA filed an amicus curiae brief in support of MEAC: Midwifery and was represented at the motion to dismiss hearing on September 18. The ASPA brief was appended to an appeal filed by MEAC during December.
- **Second**, ASPA had some early input into a draft business associate agreement that the Veteran Administration expects to use with accrediting agencies to ensure appropriate access and compliance with the HIPAA regulations.
- **Third**, because of member suggestions, URL links to several international resources have been added to the re-designed ASPA web site. Click on the RELATED LINKS button at www.aspa-usa.org. Following his retirement from NAIT: Industrial Technology, Alvin Rudisill updated the ASPA web site using red, black, gray and white as the primary colors. The site is designed to be "low-maintenance" but user-friendly. You will find some new material in the RESOURCES section; click on NEWSLETTERS to find current and past issues of ASPA News. ASPA welcomes ideas or tips for making the web site more useful.
- **Fourth**, in response to a request from members, ASPA will begin monitoring the non-governmental recognition process during 2003 by observing and reporting on the public portions of CHEA's Committee on Recognition (COR) meetings. ASPA members already receive regular reports on the federal recognition process.

- **Fifth**, at three-year intervals, ASPA invites both member and non-member specialized accreditor chief staff executives to participate in a Compensation and a Funding Sources survey. The data gathering forms for both surveys were distributed by the ASPA Management Office last fall. A summary of the survey results will be available at the Spring 2003 meeting. Detailed results will be available to all participants.

The ASPA Board encourages all members to participate and thanks those who have done so. You may still participate in the surveys if you can submit your completed forms during January 2003. Please contact the ASPA Management Office if you need another copy of the forms.

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ASPA Membership Applications Due February 15

The ASPA Member *Code of Good Practice* is the cornerstone of membership in ASPA. The Member Code was adopted early in ASPA's history and continues to serve members well. The seven sections of the Code address the concepts of 1) trustworthiness, 2) effective service, 3) respect for institutional autonomy, 4) wise decision making, 5) focusing on competence, 6) professional integrity, and 7) expertise and experience of visiting teams, commissions and staff.

If your accrediting body can show how these principles are reflected in its activities and meets the required definitions of specialized and professional, the ASPA Board of Directors encourages you to submit an application for membership in ASPA. The *Code*, definitions, and information about the application process are posted in the MEMBERSHIP INFO section of the ASPA web site: ([Membership](#)).

Applications to be reviewed at the Spring meeting are due by February 15, 2003. Applications to be reviewed at the Fall meeting are due by August 15, 2003. Contact the ASPA Office by calling 773/ 525-2160 if you have questions about eligibility or the application process.

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ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA: Local Attractions

Information compiled by: Barbara Brown Robinson and Dort Bigg

Alexandria, Virginia - the site of ASPA's Spring 2003 meeting - is a unique and historic place that keeps pace with the modern world. The City is part of a large metropolitan area surrounding the nation's Capital, yet it has retained its period character. With more than 250 years of history and hospitality to its credit, Alexandria offers an array of historic and cultural attractions. Alexandria's many historic homes, churches, businesses and museums allow residents and visitors to experience first hand the past that makes this city the charming and historic town it is today. About one-quarter of the town's 15 square miles are designated as a national or local historic district. Restored homes and shops throughout the City are still actively used by citizens

for homes, businesses and museums, bringing to life the Colonial charm of 18th and 19th century America.

History buffs can explore Alexandria's colonial heritage at Carlyle House, The Lyceum, and Christ Church and dig deep into Alexandria's history at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum.

One can take a step back in time to see how the Colonials lived with a visit to Mount Vernon Estate, Woodlawn, and The Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Shop Museum, a pharmacy owned by the same family for 141 years. Early customers included George and Martha Washington, George Mason, Daniel Webster and Robert E. Lee.

The strength and spirit of America's first president is represented at The Masonic Memorial, Mount Vernon Mansion and at The Old Presbyterian Meeting House, site of memorial services for George Washington. The heritage of Virginia's first family, the Lees, is represented at The Boyhood Home of Robert E. Lee at 607 Oronoco Street (now a private home), and the Lee Fendall House, noted for Lighthorse Harry Lee, revolutionary war hero.

Following the meeting events, those who attend the ASPA meeting can stroll the preserved cobblestone streets and enjoy the historic waterfront that is only minutes away from Washington's historic monuments. Or plan to enjoy the unique specialty shops or browse the many antique shops and galleries. The Thieves Market on Richmond Highway is the nation's oldest antique mall and the Torpedo Factory presents the opportunity to watch 160 artists at work and shop for a treasure to take home.

If you are spending additional time in the area, you could rent a bike and ride the Mount Vernon Trail along the Potomac to Mount Vernon just 9 miles to the south. Or you might want to "Bike the Sites" in Downtown D.C., kayak along the shores explored first by Captain John Smith with Atlantic Kayak Company or set sail along the Potomac on tour boats departing from The City Marina.

Restaurants throughout historic Old Town Alexandria make it possible to dine in one of a dozen seafood restaurants with a view of the water or select your choice of cuisine, including Thai, Moroccan, Mexican, Vietnamese, Mexican, French, Italian and Fusion, from some 200 excellent establishments.

The multi-faceted charm of this city, which *The Lady's Home Journal* has ranked as Number One among the "Top Ten Best Cities for Women in the United States, should help to make ASPA's Spring 2003 meeting a memorable event.

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History In The Making

by Betty Horton, Immediate Past Chair, ASPA

History will be made when ASPA celebrates its tenth birthday during the fall meeting to be held

September 7-9, 2003 at the 5-star Fairmont Scottsdale Princess resort in Scottsdale, AZ. Arizona is where the idea for ASPA was born in 1993 at a meeting of specialized and professional accreditors following the dissolution of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). This resort will be a great location for ASPA's 10th Birthday Party. The fall meeting will be a time to honor all of ASPA's members, some of the individuals who were there at the very beginning of the organization and the many others who have contributed to ASPA's growth and development.

We need your help to create an ASPA Memory Book to commemorate the first decade of progress. The book will be on view at the fall 2003 meeting prior to being archived for historical reference. We believe that everyone who has been associated with ASPA has a worthwhile experience to contribute to the book. Please take a moment to sift through your files and/or your memory to find an item for the Memory Book. You might have a document to send, or you might prefer to write a short anecdote or describe an amusing incident. Photographs will also be very much appreciated.

Plan now to share your memories by sending your contribution(s) as soon as possible to Betty Horton, immediate past Chair of the ASPA Board of Directors. The following guidelines are suggested:

1. **LENGTH:** Keep your submission to a maximum of one page if possible. Legibility is important since your memory will be printed as submitted. Be sure to include your name and how you were/are associated with ASPA.
2. **LABELS:** Submit the names of people and locations with photographs. It is preferable that you do not write on the front or back of photos unless they have already been identified in this manner.
3. **QUESTIONS:** Questions about the ASPA Memory Book project may be directed to Betty Horton at bhorton@mcleodusa.net
4. **DEADLINES:** Send Betty your memories and photos as soon as possible but no later than June 1, 2003 to:

Betty Horton
RR #2, Box 145
Tower Hill, IL 62571
(217) 567-3677

We challenge you all to accept this invitation to help document and be part of ASPA's recorded history! Your assistance is vital to the success of this project.

Book Room Now for Fall 2003

The fall 2003 ASPA Meeting will be held

Sunday - Tuesday, September 7-9, 2003 at
The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess Resort
7575 East Princess Drive
Scottsdale, AZ 85255
Hotel Phone: 480-585-4848

ASPA's group rate at this 5-star resort is
\$139/night plus taxes and resort fees.
Call for reservations: 1-800-344-4758
Refer to: ASPA Fall Meeting - Group #T0518

**Book your room before March 15, 2003
for a free upgrade to a deluxe room at the
group rate.**

If the block fills early in 2003, the hotel may
add more rooms to the group rate/

The group rate applies three (3) days before
and after the meeting if the hotel has space.
Book your room early to ensure you receive
this very special rate.

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Legal Issues in Accreditation

"Legal Issues in Accreditation - Navigating Mine Fields" is the topic for the Fall 2003 ASPA Professional Development session to be held on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning, September 8-9. In an interactive, practical program, guest speaker, Lucien "Skip" Capone, University Counsel at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, will be help us identify legal mine fields. The session will also offer tips and strategies on how to avoid problems and how to maintain the quality and integrity of our agencies' accreditation processes. The committee appreciates the member feedback and suggestions that helped identify the timeliness and importance of this topic. Plans for the program are still underway and the committee encourages you to forward comments about specific accreditation legal issues to the attention of the committee in care of the ASPA office: aspacd@aol.com.

Mark your calendars now to attend the Fall 2003 ASPA meeting and professional development session on September 8-9. See you in Scottsdale!

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Call for "Reauthorization" Comments: Due February 28, 2003

The US Department of Education published a call for comments in the December 20, 2002 Federal Register (see page 77967). The notice includes "Goals and Objectives for HEA Reauthorization" and lists a number of questions on which the public is invited to comment. The document is available in text or Adobe PDF formats at:

www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister. Please review the notice and forward your comments to the ASPA office by mid-February. The Recognition Issues Committee will review your input and compile comments to be submitted by ASPA. The deadline for receipt of comments is February 28, 2003.

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2003 Calendar of Events

- February 6: Washington Area Accreditors
- February 14: Chicago Area Accreditors
- March 10: CHEA COR: Committee on Recognition
- March 30-April 1: ASPA Spring Meeting (Alexandria, VA)
- April 28-29: CHEA Board of Directors (Washington, DC)
- June 9-10: NACIQI Meeting (Arlington, VA)
- September 7-9: ASPA Fall Meeting (Scottsdale, AZ)

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