



Message from the Chair

Neil Harvison, Director of Accreditation and Academic Affairs, ACOTE (Occupational Therapy)

It has been a busy fall for ASPA and much has been accomplished since our last meeting as a group in September. The Board met in October to develop the Association's new strategic plan for 2013-2015. Based on member recommendations we identified four areas of focus for our strategic activities: Advocacy, Communication, Education and Recognition. In addition, the Board revised the Vision, Mission and Values statements. The Board will refine the plan at a January 2012 meeting and will have more to share with membership at the Spring 2012 meeting.

Another major project has been a review of the Association's policies and Bylaws. A governance policy manual has been drafted and will be reviewed in January. In the policy development process we noted some inconsistencies in our terms of reference for the various ASPA committees. As a result the Board will propose some revisions to the Bylaws for membership consideration at the Spring 2012 meeting.

In our last newsletter I highlighted the Board's goal to improve communication with our colleagues in the higher education accreditation community and described our successful meeting with the leadership of the regional accreditors. This September, Susan Zlotlow (ERIC Chair), Joseph Vibert and I met with Jamienne S. Studley (Chair) and Arthur J. Rothkopf (Vice-Chair) of NACIQI. A conference call was held at our request following the omission of specialized accreditors from the panels that provided input to the committee in preparation for its formulation of recommendations to the Secretary on the next re-authorization of the Higher Education Act. At that meeting

the following points were made:

- The ongoing issue for ASPA members is that often laws are written for institutional accreditors and then retrofitted for programmatic / specialized accreditors;
- Specialized accreditors have been held to standards that apply to institutional accreditors based in part on the Guide; recommendations should include that the next set of regulations are more clear about what applies to specialized versus institutional accreditors; and
- NACIQI has the right to use its own judgment in the recognition process and to make recommendations that are different from the ones made by staff; this was not evident in the December 2010 and June 2011 meetings.

The leadership of NACIQI was very responsive in acknowledging our feedback. They extended the length of the call to ensure that they heard all of our issues and invited further ongoing dialogue.

I am looking forward to our Spring 2012 meeting in Arlington. We have made one major change to the format for this meeting. In response to member feedback from the fall meeting, the full afternoon session on Sunday will be for members only. Non-member attendees are invited to join us at the reception that evening and on Monday and Tuesday. To help facilitate the closed members' session, please email me (nharvison@aota.org) any topics or issues that you want to hear discussed.

Thank you again for your commitment and contribution to furthering the goals of ASPA. ▲

Assessment – beyond certification, graduation and employment rates

With today's focus on student achievement outcomes, the **2012 Spring Professional Development Program** will highlight ideas on what to measure and how – outside of the licensure and employment rate boxes. Participants will go home with an appreciation of the functions and benefits of qualitative assessment and strategies for conducting effective training in the use and evaluation of qualitative assessment data and preparing staff and volunteers in the use of professional judgment in the accreditation review process.

Plan to attend this session on **Monday, March 26th (1:00 pm - 5:00 pm) and Tuesday, March 27th (8:30 am - 12:00 pm)** at the Key Bridge Marriott, Arlington VA. Go to www.aspa-usa.org/upcoming-meetings for the registration form and agenda.

September in Atlanta - ASPA Fall 2011 meetings

With a wonderful venue and excellent weather, the September 2012 meeting in Atlanta provided the opportunity for attendees to share ideas and talk about current issues in accreditation and higher education.

The first day began with the Members Only session. Susan Zlotlow, Chair of our External Recognition Issues Committee (ERIC), led a discussion on pertinent topics and one result was that the ASPA code that describes our position on how a recognition agency should operate was re-affirmed. Afterwards, the open Members' Business meeting was held and followed by a presentation on issues in accreditation by Terry Hartle, Senior Vice President of the American Council on Education.



The day ended with the first of two receptions, which were reviewed by several attendees as the most opportune and appreciated times during ASPA meetings for sharing information and discussing issues. Presumably the liquid refreshment may have facilitated some of the exchange...

The second day began with an open Board meeting, followed by a strategic planning session facilitated by Paul Gaston, Trustees Professor, Kent State University. The Board took away a list of initiatives and member suggestions to incorporate into the strategic plan for upcoming years as well as direction for updating the organization's Vision, Mission and Values statements.

The Fall Professional Development Committee held a workshop titled *Designing Effective Technology-based and Blended Learning Reviewer Training Programs*. Led by instructional designer and technologist Jim Guilkey of S4NetQuest, learning profiles and traditional and engaged learning were discussed, case studies were presented and examples from ASPA Members were shared.

All in all, the Fall 2011 meeting was, as usual, appreciated by attendees. The variety of ideas and the value of sharing problems, strategies and solutions with other accreditors continue to be where ASPA's strength lies. ▲



Message from the Executive Director

Joseph Vibert

The second half of 2011 has been just as occupied, if not more so than the first six months. While I was not able to meet with all ASPA members this year, two-thirds isn't bad, and I will do my best to visit the rest of you in 2012. I also hope to meet with more of our colleagues and stakeholders.

A few things that have kept us busy in addition to those already mentioned in Neil's message include the start of branding initiatives and providing written and oral commentary to NACIQI in December 2011 regarding the next re-authorization of the Higher Education Act.

I'd like to thank all the volunteers who have contributed to the Association over the past 12 months – the Board of Directors, the External Recognition Issues Committee, the Nominations Committee, the Membership Committee and the Spring and Fall Professional Development Committees. Volunteer member support is critical to our organization and greatly appreciated.

I look forward to working with the Board and the Members to enhance the voice of specialized accreditors in the world of accreditation and higher education. ▲

ASPA has a new look

Some of you may have noticed that the ASPA website changed quietly over the Thanksgiving weekend and that we have adopted new colors and a new logo:



We went with a “soft” launch and started with the basics. Progressively over the next months, documents will be reviewed and re-formatted as necessary, new webpages and sections will be added to the site, and additional member services and features will be implemented.

Some of the new features of the website that will be incorporated over the course of the next year include a secure member portal that will be accessed with individual usernames and passwords. In addition to the previous contents of the members’ page, the member profile database will be made available so that agencies can easily update their information. It will also be possible to use the database to search for information and data that is often currently sought through the listserv. The listserv archives will become more user friendly and meeting materials will be available for download.

The new website is intended to include everything that was on the previous one – if you notice that something has been left out, please let us know. And, if you have any ideas for additional content and features, don’t hesitate to send those to us.

The logo was chosen with input from the Members and the Board of Directors. The concept was to incorporate fresh colors and a look that would be recognizable and distinctive within ASPA’s stakeholder community. The varied graphic shapes in the logo represent buildings and “locations” where higher learning takes place and denotes our respect for diversity.



Additionally, our graphic artist developed an ASPA “button” that members can use to indicate that they are ASPA members and link to the ASPA website. Members just need to request the button and we will send it along. ▲

Register Now

ASPA Spring 2012 Meeting

March 25 – 27, 2012
Key Bridge Marriott
Arlington, VA

Sunday, March 25th – starting at 1:00 pm, the entire afternoon will be devoted to a closed session for a discussion of Member issues. The reception that follows at 5:30 pm will be open to all attendees.

Monday, March 26th – starting at 8:30 am, there will be a presentation on recognition issues, followed by an open Members’ meeting, and then an open Board meeting.

The **Professional Development Program** will start at 1:00 pm on **Monday** and finish **Tuesday, March 27th** at noon.

Members are invited to send requests for **agenda items and topics for discussion** to the ASPA office or to any of the members of the Board by **February 15, 2012**.

Go to www.aspa-usa.org/upcoming-meetings for registration forms and schedules.



Become a Member

...the authoritative voice of specialized and professional accreditation...

The Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors is the only organization in the U.S. that promotes the importance of specialized and professional accreditation. We provide a collaborative forum and a collective voice for the community of approximately 60 member agencies that assess the quality of specialized and professional higher education programs and schools.

Some of the many benefits of membership in ASPA include:

Professional development and continuing education - our twice yearly meetings allow members to stay informed of important trends and developments in accreditation and provide educational sessions that showcase best practices.

Networking and peer interaction - membership encourages the exchange of ideas so that members may learn from other accreditors to improve their performance. It provides a forum for focused discussion and analysis with members across the country, as well as a mechanism to promote common action.

Representation and advocacy - the association reinforces the importance of specialized accreditation by serving as a unified, national voice. It is the only association that solely represents specialized accreditation to broader communities. The association addresses accreditation issues in educational, governmental (including Federal legislation), and public policy contexts and communicates with the public about accreditation.

Enhancement of the credibility and image of accreditation - members agree to abide by the *ASPA Member Code of Good Practice* that describes a high standard of professionalism that embraces the importance of focusing on educational quality, maintaining a respectful relationship between the accreditor and the institution under review, and requiring a thorough and effective orientation, training and development program for all personnel.

Visit www.aspa-usa.org for more information and to apply for membership. ▲

Save the Date

ASPA Professional Development Program – September 10 - 11, 2012 – Hyatt Regency, Minneapolis, MN

Defining Transparency: The Accreditor's New Clothes – How Bare Do We Dare? is the working title for the Fall 2012 professional development program.

Transparency in accreditation is a hot topic that's here to stay. With the focus on accountability from several communities of interest, this session should have something for everyone. Some topic areas to be covered include:

- transparency in accreditation process and standards review
- availability of student achievement measures and outcomes for public review
- what amount of decision information makes sense for all to see
- how recognition and reporting systems are influencing what accreditors require of programs

This program is being designed to engender lively and provocative discussion. Perspectives from different interest groups will be presented, including education administrators, accreditation agencies, recognition bodies, and consumers.

Be sure to mark your calendar to attend the program Monday and Tuesday, September 10 - 11, 2012.

ASPA - Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors
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