



Message from the Chair

Laura Rasar King, Executive Director
Council on Education for Public Health

With summer approaching, I'd like to bring you up to date on the association's activities and plans, as we continue to direct our efforts on the focus areas of ASPA's strategic plan – advocacy, member services and relationship building.

As you know, we have been busy for the last year responding to guidance documents issued periodically by the US Department of Education, and this activity is unlikely to slow as we prepare for possible reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 2017. We plan to meet with Congressional staff this fall to highlight our positions and discuss our concerns related to the reauthorization. We also expect updates to the CHEA policies to be released in draft for public comment later this year. We will be sure, in all cases, to provide commentary that affirms the role and importance of specialized and professional accreditation in service of the public good through competent practitioners in a diverse range of professions.

At the excellently reviewed Spring Conference (more information follows in this newsletter) we began to implement leadership development activities based on member interest expressed during member discussions and a member survey. We identified mentors to interact with newer ASPA members during and after the conference and we conducted the first ASPA new member orientation, during which we discussed the association and how it operates, identified opportunities for new members to get involved in ASPA and helped new members make sense of the alphabet soup that is higher education accreditation. More activities are planned for the fall conference and I am always open to your ideas and suggestions.

In January, ASPA released its first ever report detailing data about how specialized and professional accreditors use outcomes to measure student and program success. In June, ASPA updated the report to include information from 100% of ASPA members. This report will be a valuable tool as we represent ASPA to Congressional leaders during reauthorization.

The ASPA executive director continues to raise the association's profile with a non-stop schedule of meetings with stakeholders and members, facilitation of meetings between the Department and members and updates on recognition meetings and stakeholder activities. He has also presented at conferences of our Canadian and European counterparts in professional accreditation. The private member website

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has been re-designed for ease of use, information for students has been updated, and we have a [new video on the importance of programmatic accreditation](#).

ASPA continues to solidify its role as the leader and representative of specialized and professional accreditation. Not only is ASPA reaching out to its higher education partners – they are regularly reaching out to ASPA and ASPA is increasingly becoming an influential voice in accreditation policy at the national level. This progress would not have been possible without the tireless dedication of ASPA staff and all of the volunteers on the ASPA board, committees and task forces. If you have comments, questions or ideas or would like to get involved, I would love to hear from you. Please feel free to reach out to me (lking@ceph.org) at any time.

Spring 2016 in Chicago

The ASPA Spring Conference and Annual Meeting 2016 was well attended and received some of the best reviews ever. Sessions prior to the official conference start addressed Title IV and accreditor responsibilities, meeting workforce needs through holistic college admission reviews and a new member orientation. The closed Member session included an update on current issues in accreditation and higher education and committee and task force reports. The conference opened with the Members' meeting followed by a Board meeting. Elections results:

- Laura Rasar King – Board of Directors member and Chair
- Jenny Gunderman – Nominations Committee member
- Mary Reeves – Nominations Committee member
- Sue Graves – Nominations Committee Chair

The following individuals were presented with certificates of appreciation:

- Patti Tice – for service as a member and Chair of the Nominations Committee, May 2012 – April 2016
- Jan Winn – for service as a member of the Nominations Committee, May 2012 – April 2016
- Frank Gerbasi – for service as a member and Chair of the Membership Committee, May 2010 – April 2016
- Barbara Farkas – for service as a member and Chair of the Fall Professional Development Sub-committee, May 2010 – April 2016
- Margaret Schulte – for service as a member and Chair of the Spring Professional Development Sub-Committee, May 2015 – April 2016

Monday morning sessions included Paul Fain's (Inside Higher Ed) commentary on presidential candidates and expectations for higher education, a discussion on succession planning by Joan Walsh (Executive Service Corps of Chicago), and a regular favorite – Elise Scanlon (Elise Scanlon Law Group) talked about good practices and risk management for appeals processes.

ASPA Fall Conference 2016

September 11th – 13th, Arlington

Go to aspa-usa.org/eventsnews/ for registration and the full agenda.

Pre-conference sessions

- Career Progression in Accreditation - roundtable
- New Chief Accreditation Officer - roundtable
- Orientation to ASPA
- Health Professions Accreditors Collaborative (HPAC)

Conference

- Higher Education and Accreditation in the News
- Good Practice in Distance Education Review
- What Accreditors Need to Know about State Authorization

Stakeholder Relations in Accreditation

Good practices for:

- staff relations with programs, including providing technical assistance and advice;
- staff relations with the profession and the public;
- managing the standards revision process; and
- determining outcome indicators and setting benchmarks.



Spring Conference 2016 in Chicago

The professional development component of the conference – **Consistency and Fairness in Accreditation** – covered a broad range of topics:

- reducing bias and ensuring consistency in accreditation reviews, while recognizing the distinct nature of each educational program;
- working with teams, review committees, and boards to establish fair and reproducible outcomes, including such issues as inter-rater reliability;
- employing decision-making processes that result in fair and reliable outcomes; and
- developing risk prevention practices, fixing internal systems and implementing damage control when bias arises.

Thanks to the Professional Development Committee:

- Margaret Schulte, President & CEO, Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education
- Mary B. Gregoire, Executive Director, Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics
- Karen Martens Brandt, Director of Education & Research, American Veterinary Medical Association
- Benjamin Murray, Director of Accreditation Services, Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education

Outcomes - Getting to the Core of Programmatic Education and Accreditation

As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, ASPA released a report in January that provides an analysis of the outcomes assessment practices of 46 of our member accreditors. The report was presented at the CHEA Conference and subsequently updated in June with information from all 60 ASPA members.

All ASPA member accreditors have requirements related to outcomes assessment as an important component of the quality assurance process. The approaches used vary based on the nature of the profession. Each accreditor's outcomes requirements were categorized into three groups:

- Competency assessment – the measurement of student learning outcomes or competency attainment. Accreditors may identify specific competencies that students must achieve, or require programs to develop their own competencies within a framework defined by the accreditor.
- Bright line indicators established by the accreditor – a specific quantitative threshold regarding an outcome, established by the accrediting agency. These thresholds are typically graduation or retention rates, placement rates for employment or internships, or licensure exam pass rates.
- Program-determined indicators – typically based on the program mission and context, within a framework established by the accreditor. Some agencies

ASPA Award 2016

Dr. Peter H. Vlases was the recipient of the 2016 Cynthia A. Davenport Award in recognition of exceptional effort on behalf of specialized and professional accreditors. Pete has long been a proponent of good accreditation practice and a strong supporter of ASPA – serving on committees and on the Board of Directors as Chair and Treasurer. He led the leadership transition in 2010 and encouraged the strategic development of ASPA as the recognized voice of specialized and professional accreditation. He has taken on the role of "ambassador" for programmatic accreditors with the US Department of Education, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, and potential members of ASPA while serving as a mentor and colleague to ASPA members. We thank him for his commitment to excellence, diligent service and ongoing contributions.



Peter H. Vlases – 2016 Cynthia A. Davenport Award Recipient

allow for broad program discretion; others prescribe specific indicators, similar to bright line indicators such as graduation, placement, and licensure rates.

Check out the [full report here](#) for more detailed information about outcomes assessment practices among ASPA members.

Become a Member

The Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors provides a collaborative forum and a collective voice for the community of approximately 60 member accreditors that assess the quality of programmatic higher education programs and schools in the United States. We are the only organization that promotes the importance of specialized and professional accreditation.

Some of the benefits of full membership in ASPA include:

- A unified and common voice for issues of importance to programmatic accreditation and higher education nationally.
- Networking and peer interaction in conference settings; participating in a community of programmatic accreditors; sharing good practices in carrying out accreditation work and improving performance.
- Professional development for volunteers, staff and educators and opportunities to learn from other accreditors.
- Current information on important issues and developments.
- Advocacy to our broader communities in higher education, government, institutional accreditors, and recognition bodies.
- Enhancement of the credibility and image of accreditation through endorsement of the ASPA-Member Code of Good Practice that embraces a high standard of professionalism and integrity in the conduct of accreditation operations and promotes quality in education and respect for institutional autonomy.
- Member services include: newsletters to the broad community and e-letters within the membership; development of position papers on issues and good practices; in person and written representation on programmatic accreditation on legislation and recognition issues to stakeholders; a proprietary database of member profiles and organization structure; a periodic compensation survey; and access to a private e-list to gather and share information within the membership.

ASPA also welcomes Organizational and Individual Affiliate Members: **organizations** with an interest in education and quality assurance that do not meet the criteria for full membership as programmatic accreditors (e.g., professional associations, continuing education providers, institutional accreditors, vendors) and **individuals** interested in the mission and purposes of ASPA (e.g., persons serving as accreditation directors within institutions, faculty, professional association staff, peer reviewers, education consultants, curriculum designers, deans, program directors).

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

ASPA Spring Conference 2017

April 2nd - 4th, Chicago

Program Outcomes and Communicating the Value of Accreditation

Specialized and professional accreditors protect the public by ensuring that students are equipped with the necessary competencies to practice safely and effectively in their chosen profession. Our program will focus on good practices in and discussions about:

- identifying program and student achievement outcomes that are relevant to the profession
- establishing expected levels of achievement and effectively communicating supporting rationales to communities of interest
- determining next steps when programs do not achieve prescribed thresholds set by the program or the accreditor
- communicating good outcomes achieved through accreditation (public protection, fostering program improvement, etc.)

Plan to attend the conference April 2nd - 4th in Chicago. The full program and registration information will be available in December at aspa-usa.org/eventsnews/