

## Message from the Chair

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



With my first year as ASPA Chair more than halfway through, I would like to thank the Board for its support as we continue the important work of the association.

Since early this past summer, ASPA has been involved in several activities related to

higher education and accreditation:

- We gave testimony in a panel presentation to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), for that committee's preparation of recommendations for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA).
- We provided input to Senator Merkley on a bill that would provide consumer protections to students.
- We provided commentary on Senator Harkin's proposal for the reauthorization of the HEA.
- We participated in meetings with institutional accreditors and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to discuss common concerns regarding policy direction for the reauthorization.
- We visited several staff of Senators and Representatives to deliver the message about the importance of specialized and professional accreditation and our principles and positions regarding the formulation of legislation.

The November elections are behind us, and it appears that the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act may not move forward until the second half of 2015. We will continue to monitor developments and promote the interests of ASPA members to Congress and other communities of interest.

The Board met in October to discuss strategy and plan the 2015 Spring Conference, among other items. We reviewed the results of the strategic discussion at the 2014 Fall Conference and have started to prioritize initiatives for the upcoming years. Following legal review, proposed amendments to the bylaws and articles of incorporation will be brought to the

spring meeting for member review and approval. The Spring Professional Development Committee is putting together an interesting program, and our conference will be followed by the INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) 2015 Conference. I look forward to seeing you in Chicago at the end of March.

On a somber note, the ASPA family lost some of its own in the last few months: Carol MoneyMaker, Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools, Janet Teeters, Accreditation Services of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, and Patricia McCarty, wife of John McCarty, Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant. I extend my condolences to their families and friends.

I am grateful for the work done by our members who participate on ASPA committees and task forces. The success of the association depends on the invaluable contributions from our volunteers. Thank you all, and best wishes for the New Year. ▲

## Spring Conference 2015 *Redefining and Enhancing the Footprint of Accreditation*

The accrediting community continues to be impacted by advances in technology and the ever changing landscape of society. We will explore how accreditors have utilized technology and new concepts in higher education to: transform processes and operations, increase public awareness about the value and importance of accreditation, and reduce risk to ensure confidentiality and credibility in the accreditation process. Attendees will have the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and to take away ideas to enhance the effectiveness of their accreditation operations.

Plan to attend this session on **March 30 - 31** at the Millennium Knickerbocker Hotel, Chicago IL. Click [upcoming-meetings](#) for registration and the agenda.

## ASPA Fall Conference 2014

The fall conference in Arlington in September received some of the best reviews ever from our attendees. A few highlights:

### Member Session

As usual, members were presented with an environmental scan on the current state of affairs in the world of accreditation and higher education, and they had the opportunity to discuss issues of concern with their colleagues.

The member session opened with a facilitated discussion to determine expectations for success in strategic focus areas that were identified in a member survey that had been administered in the summer. The facilitator (Dr. Michela Perrone of MMP Associates) did an excellent job of putting the members to work – and the result was great material for the Board to use at its October meeting to begin fleshing out ASPA's strategic plan for the next three years.

### Conference

The conference officially started with the Sunday evening reception during which attendees shared and exchanged ideas over good food and drink. Monday opened with a presentation by Libby Nelson (Vox) - **Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act...and other Concerns**. Libby is becoming a regular speaker at ASPA conferences due to her great energy and insights – and this conference was no exception.

The next session - **Innovation in Education** - addressed changes in the post-secondary landscape: competency-based education, prior learning assessment and how it relates to competency-based education, how institutions and programs give credit for prior learning, and how accreditors evaluate the quality of programs that use these methods. The speakers were well received: Cathy Sandeen (American Council on Education), Sally Johnstone (Western Governors University), Becky Klein-Collins (Council for Adult & Experiential Learning), and Sandra Bitonti Stewart (Midwifery Education Accreditation Council).

### Education Component

The professional development program - **Risk Management for Accreditors** - covered several topic areas including engagement of the accreditation decision-making body, fiduciary duties of care and loyalty in the accreditation setting, due process in decision-making, appeals and complaint procedures, and indemnification and insurance. The program was expertly facilitated by Elise Scanlon of Elise Scanlon Law Group.

Elise and Julianne E. Dymowski (Partner, Whiteford, Taylor & Preston) opened the program with a discussion of the state of the law on accreditation in light of recent court cases.

George W. Hatch Jr. and Jennifer S. Anderson Warwick (Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions) shared their experiences related to engaging accreditation decision-makers, including challenges associated with lack of engagement, strategies to overcome those challenges and building a framework for an engaged and highly effective board.

Elise followed with a presentation on board engagement and effective decision-making with scenarios and case examples. After that a group exercise on content and process for drafting accreditation decision letters primed the attendees for the next day's session on due process and fundamental fairness. Topics comprised adherence to established rules and procedures, consistency and fairness in the application of standards, notice and opportunity to respond, common frailties and best practices for decision letters, and appeals and complaints.

The program ended with a session moderated by Peter H. Vlasses (Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education) on indemnification and insurance. Danny M. Howell (Attorney, Sands Anderson) covered information on assessing and binding coverage, the importance of reading insurance policies, and what to do in the event of litigation. ▲



## ERIC Update

The External Recognition Issues Committee (ERIC) consists of members of ASPA whose agencies are recognized by the US Secretary of Education (USDE) and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The committee meets on average by teleconference once per month and monitors the higher education and accreditation environment, with particular attention to the national processes by which accrediting organizations are recognized. The committee reviews and proposes comment on activities of the various entities that have an impact on accrediting organizations and accredited programs and institutions (e.g., Congress, USDE, CHEA, and the States).

In December, Susan Zlotlow resigned from her position as Director of Program Consultation and Accreditation and Associate Executive Director of the Education Directorate of the American Psychological Association. Susan has been the ERIC Chair for several years – and we thank her for her dedication and contributions to this important committee and ASPA. We welcome Robert Hash, Assistant Secretary of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education as the new Chair and wish him well in this endeavor.

Over the past 6 months, ERIC has discussed and weighed in on several issues, including the Gainful Employment regulations, Senator Harkins proposal for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, and potential implications of the outcome of the November 2014 elections.

While there was no official ASPA response to the USDE's Gainful Employment rules that were released in October, ERIC will continue to monitor how these play out. The rules have standards for graduates' debt-to-earnings ratios and apply to vocational programs, including most of the for-profit sector's offerings. Non-degree programs at community colleges and some non-degree programs at four-year nonprofit institutions, both public and private, would also need to comply with the rules, which are set to go into effect in July 2015.

ERIC was instrumental in the development of ASPA's response to Senator Harkin's discussion draft for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The final version of the bill was released in December and although not enacted, it may be used as a guide by Senate Democrats in the new Congress.

With new leadership in 2015, it appears that the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act will be a priority for the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, but not its first priority. It is expected that one or two "white papers" will be produced with the opportunity for the community to provide feedback. As well, the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), is expected to provide recommendations for the reauthorization for public comment early in 2015. ▲

## Spring Conference

### Preliminary Program

March 29 - 31, 2015

Millennium Knickerbocker, Chicago IL

### *Pre-meetings (for ASPA members)*

#### **Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>**

8:30 am - 10:30 am - **Competency-Based Learning  
- What Accreditors Need to Know**

10:45 am - 11:45 am - **EASPA - European Alliance  
for Subject-Specific and Professional  
Accreditation and Quality Assurance**

1:00 pm - 5:00 pm - **Member Session**

*Members are invited to send requests for  
discussion topics to the ASPA office or to any of  
the Board members by February 27, 2015.*

### **Conference (for all registrants)**

#### **Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>**

5:30 pm - 7:00 pm - **Opening Reception**

- award presentation

#### **Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>**

8:30 am - 10:00 am - **US Elections and Higher  
Education...what's next?**

10:15 am - 11:00 am - **Annual Members' Meeting**

- elections
- bylaw revisions

11:15 am - 12:00 pm - **Board Meeting**

- budget approval
- committee appointments
- service awards

1:00 pm - 5:00 pm - **Redefining and Enhancing  
the Footprint of Accreditation**

(See page 1 for program description.)

5:15 pm - 6:45 pm - **Reception**

#### **Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>**

8:30 am - 12:00 pm - **Redefining and Enhancing  
the Footprint of Accreditation** continues

Go to [www.aspa-usa.org/upcoming-meetings](http://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 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 regular 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, regional accreditors, institutional accreditors, and vendors.
- **Individuals** interested in the mission and purposes of ASPA, such as persons serving as accreditation directors within institutions, faculty, staff of professional associations, peer reviewers, education consultants, curriculum designers, deans, and program directors.

Visit [www.aspa-usa.org](http://www.aspa-usa.org) for more information and to apply for membership. ▲

## Fall Conference

September 13 - 15, 2015 - Washington, DC

### Educational Program – *It's all about good practice*

We received plenty of great ideas in the evaluations of the fall 2014 conference – and next fall's programming will be devoted to helping accreditors further improve various aspects of their operations.

We'll look at good practices in:

- Stakeholder engagement with an emphasis on employers – how to gain necessary/important input about development of standards and student outcomes;
- Complaints – how accreditors deal with an increasing volume of complaints;
- Mergers and consortia – how accreditors can be better prepared with processes to address the changing landscape of higher education mergers and acquisition; and
- Value of accreditation – how to communicate to stakeholders that the accreditation process and status are worthwhile.

Attendees will learn about the various issues and gain ideas for enhancing the effectiveness of their accreditation operations.

Plan to attend this session on **September 14<sup>th</sup>** and **15<sup>th</sup>** at the Washington Marriott, Washington DC. Registration information and agendas will be available on the ASPA website at [upcoming-meetings](#) in late spring 2015.

**Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors**

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