

AACP REPORT

Marking our Milestones: Address of the 2016-2017 President to the Opening General Session at the 2017 Annual Meeting

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It has been my privilege to serve this past year as president of AACP. I have greatly enjoyed working with our members, our board of directors and staff. The year has gone by quickly. It has been a year of ambitious pursuit of our shared goals and as president I have had the opportunity to see the full scope of activity in the association at all levels. I have been fascinated and motivated by all the effort and energy from our members, officers and staff over the year. Over one-third of our members serve in some volunteer role within the association. As an organization, we have fully committed to addressing the issues of most importance to our schools and colleges, and we are fully committed to enhance our approach to implement change in a more timely and effective manner.

Last year at our annual meeting we talked about the lack of clarity in health care policy. Since that meeting we have had the national election and the issues are not any clearer than they were a year ago. We now have different people in the most influential offices in charge of health policy, Medicare and Medicaid, and federal research funding, and their agenda is quite different from those who preceded them. But we are still faced with the same unmet health care needs of society and the need to ask the tough questions about what it is that pharmacists should do and what we should do as educators, practitioners, and scientists. I remain optimistic that pharmacists can continue to have an important role in health care, and if contributing to their fullest, can have even more impact on improving care.

Over the past year we have all been asked to look at our association in a different way and answer the question, "What can we accomplish together as an association that we cannot accomplish as individuals or within our schools and colleges independently?" The answer required that we change our thinking of our relationship to and within AACP. To recognize that we are not just members who benefit from the services AACP provides. We can accomplish big goals in partnership within AACP that are not possible by each of us working separately. The questions and issues that we wrestle with in pharmacy education are best tackled by all of us working together.

This last year we completed a new strategic plan to guide the work of AACP.¹ A plan that focuses on our top priorities and in which progress will continuously be assessed through detailed performance measures. We have a new vision statement: *We envision a world of healthy people through the transformation of health professions education.*² This statement says to me that we believe we have, and can continue to have, a significant impact on the health of our society here at home and around the globe. To see this vision become a reality, pharmacists must be better promoters of wellness and population health and managers of chronic diseases through a consistent primary care practice model.

We are all aware of the decline in student applications to schools of pharmacy around the country.

For us to be successful in having an impact on health care, it will require that we have the very best people entering the profession. Promoting a consistent pharmacist patient care model and ensuring that graduates can perform specific work activities (or entrustable professional activities [EPAs]) will help us tell our story to those outside of pharmacy.

Last year I used the example of my favorite sport, running, and contrasted running alone and achieving mediocre performance, versus running together and performing much better. What can we accomplish better as an association than we can accomplish as individuals or within our schools and colleges independently? This year has clearly demonstrated that we can tackle big goals as an association that are not possible by each of us working independently. Our new strategic plan has given us a clear direction for members and staff with well-articulated priorities. Our priority #1 is "AACP will partner with stakeholders to increase the PharmD applicant pipeline to ensure there will be an appropriate number and quality of pharmacists to meet society's needs." During the past year we relaunched "Pharmacy Is Right For Me" targeting middle and high school students with current career information on pharmacy.³

We also launched the Pharm4Me Innovation Challenge, a competition in which high school students and student pharmacists partner to identify medication or health-related problems in their communities, and to propose innovative solutions. We created a network of national recruitment champions from colleges and schools of pharmacy, which now has more than 120 champions ready to provide local, regional and national recruitment events. We co-led the inaugural Health Professions Week, a partnership of 19 health professions offering various online and live activities for high school and undergraduate students.

This year we also reaffirmed a broad commitment to increasing diversity among applicants.

Our board of directors has adopted this statement: “ACCP affirms its commitment to foster an inclusive community and leverage diversity of thought, background, perspective, and experience to advance pharmacy education and improve health.”

This was the first year for a new standing committee, the Student Affairs Committee, chaired by Renae Chesnut. The committee affirmed the need for a national awareness campaign, which we plan to launch early next year. They also recommended actions to enhance student wellness and stress management, and they collected resources for schools.

Our priority #2 is “*ACCP, in collaboration with stakeholders, will seek to raise the profile of pharmacy as an essential health care profession.*” This strategic priority was developed in response to the need to provide the public, including pharmacy school applicants and their families, with a better understanding of the scope of what pharmacists do, and the career opportunities for pharmacists. We have taken bold steps to achieve this objective. One is the creation of a network of more than 90 brand ambassadors from our member schools and colleges who are spreading the stories of pharmacists making an impact on people’s health and lives. Another is the #HealthyStartsHere social media campaign, which began in May, and which has already reached more than 440,000 unique users on Twitter and Facebook. We are excited about the new ACCP website, which is on target to launch this fall.

ACCP is nurturing a committed group of partners, within pharmacy and health care, to support an awareness campaign for our profession. In addition to our colleagues in the Joint Commission of Pharmacy Practitioners, we have met with representatives from the industry and the National Association of Chain Drug Stores to discuss our goals. Later this summer we will seek proposals from national communications partners, and we will launch the campaign next year.

Our priority #3 is “*To lead and partner with other health professions in the transformation of innovative health professions education and practice.*” Our Academic Affairs Committee, led by Amy Pittenger, carried forward the work of previous committees on the EPAs, including developing potential uses for the EPAs and creating a practical roadmap for implementation of EPAs across our schools and colleges.⁴ Our Professional Affairs Committee, led by Karen Whalen, studied the value of student pharmacists in experiential education and clearly demonstrated that students make significant contributions to improve quality of health care and reduce medication expense during their practice experiences. Their report provides a comprehensive summary of the data supporting that assessment.

Research and graduate education have always been important missions for our academy and these are the focus of our Priority #4 “ACCP will enable innovation to sustain high impact research/scholarship and graduate education.” You are all familiar with the CAPE Competencies for PharmD curriculum. This year the Research and Graduate Affairs Committee, led by Sam Poloyac, developed six domains of core competencies for graduate education in the pharmaceutical sciences. This work will carry on to further define competencies while allowing for the wide range of disciplines and training experiences within our graduate programs.

Earlier this year, ACCP announced the launch of ACCP Catalyst, a year-long professional development program designed to take mid-career researchers to the next level in their research and leadership potential.⁵ This program includes in-person sessions, webinars and individualized guidance to enable participants to build networks, identify new opportunities and develop the tools and skills necessary to become the next change agents at their institutions.

Because our federal government sets the agenda and provides the biggest source of funding for health care and health-related research, it is imperative that ACCP identify and well understand federal programs. The Argus commission, led by Brian Crabtree, was charged to identify major federal programs that provide greater opportunity for ACCP involvement. They closely examined the precision medicine initiative, the Cancer Moonshot and the opioid abuse programs and recommended approaches for ACCP to become more involved.

While we remain actively supportive of bills for pharmacist provider status there should be increased emphasis on what we can do at the local and state levels. Advocacy is necessary in the interest of serving our communities as well as achieving our strategic plan goals related to the pipeline and branding the profession. With

that in mind, our Advocacy committee led by Ron Jordan, this year, examined opportunities for schools to advocate for their institutions and the profession at the local and state level. The committee explored and highlighted models for community engagement using previous Weaver Transformative Community Service Award winners.

Almost all of the Association activities over the past year involve change, both minor and major. How we manage change will determine to a great extent how successful we will be. Remember, AACP is more than a dedicated staff and volunteers, it is all of us, all our members, working together to achieve the goals of the strategic plan and of our profession. We should all be proud of the advances in pharmacy education. AACP is committed to supporting our institutions and developing our leaders. The Academic Leadership Fellows Program is about to welcome its 14th cohort. To date, 400 fellows have benefited from this program.

We recognize that there are big challenges ahead. We should make sure that people are more aware of how pharmacists contribute to health care and that our graduates remain relevant and well-focused on the important problems that our society has with medications.

We should be better prepared to address health crises as they arise, such as opioid abuse.

Our work as an association is essential to the success of our profession and to the success of our individual schools and colleges. Our collective action enhances motivation to achieve real and meaningful progress on our goals. This race is not a short one. If anything, it is a marathon and requires persistence. Together, we will succeed.

REFERENCES

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