

AACH President's Message

March, 2015

In this month's Presidential message, I thought I would focus on the topic of diversity. Increasing diversity in AACH membership and leadership is one of our important organizational goals (see below).

Why? I can think of numerous reasons.

- Our society is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-racial. It has also increasingly recognized the value of inclusion, and of understanding, respecting, and appropriately integrating different cultures and perspectives. A diverse healthcare workforce that more closely matches those of our patients should enhance our understanding of and effectiveness with those being served. It should increase our ability to provide patient-centered care.
- Health care is becoming increasingly complex and outcomes driven. Cross-disciplinary and translational research is required to better understand and address health care challenges. Both require the coordinated input of multi-professional, diverse teams to accomplish outcomes that cannot be accomplished, or accomplished nearly so well, by individuals. Well-functioning teams generally perform better than individuals. Diverse perspectives and input in addressing tasks generally result in improved task performance, whether the task is service delivery or research.
- Working effectively with individuals from different backgrounds improves our own cross-cultural understanding, sensitivity, and communication; and increases our awareness of our own ladder of assumptions and unconscious biases, so that we alter them or at least manage them appropriately.
- Increased diversity within AACH can increase opportunities for cross-professional and cross-cultural collaborations, research, and educational and clinical program development.
- A diversified faculty could help expand and address the needs of a multi-professional audience in terms of external educational program development, which is very much a part of AACH's vision. External programs generate revenue that can be used to support our non-revenue generating faculty development and research activities, enhance member benefits, and develop new programs.
- Increasing the diversity of professions within AACH can increase membership, and thereby our financial health, which in turn can be used to increase member benefits and enhance existing or develop new programs.

How can we achieve greater diversity? That is the more difficult question. We do have a lot going for us. The goal of diversity is certainly consistent with our mission, vision, and beliefs as an organization (see <http://www.aachonline.org/dnn/AboutAACH/MissionVision.aspx>). We have defined diversity broadly in terms of profession, specialty, level of seniority, interests (research, education, practice), skills, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and geography. We are a welcoming organization. But achieving diversity is much more challenging than just saying we want it. Our organization is not as diverse as it should be in most of the areas mentioned above. I think we need to do the following:

- Develop ongoing data reports on diversity that are reviewed by the board and committee members regularly.
- Develop specific measurable objectives for each area of focus, not just at the board but also at the committee level, and expect initiative and accountability in attempting to achieve the objectives.
- Develop critical masses of members and leaders for each area of desired diversity, which would both attract new members in that area as well as help those joining feel more welcome.
- Recruit actively in targeted areas, not just expect folks from targeted groups to join on their own without invitation, encouragement, explanation, and making them feel wanted.
- Identify and remove barriers to achieving objectives, be they financial or other.
- Communicate in an ongoing fashion all of the above to our membership, and engage members in helping achieve our objectives.
- Proactively welcome and create opportunities for new members.

These are just my ideas, though based on input from many. I would welcome an even more diverse input. Please email me (dkern1@jhmi.edu) with your ideas, suggestions, or willingness to participate/contribute to achieving our diversity goal. You can also go to the “Volunteer” section of our website (<http://www.aachonline.org/dnn/Membership/Volunteer.aspx>) if you would like to volunteer.

Best wishes,

Dave Kern

GOALS FOR 2015

- Maintain Financial Strength
 - Fiscal responsibility for core programs
 - Profit for external programs
 - Philanthropy
- Preserve/Strengthen Current Programs
 - Core Faculty Development: ENRICH, Winter Course, FIT Program
 - Research Meetings: ICCH/Forum
 - DocCom, External Programs
 - Publications: Medical Encounter, PEC
- Expand Membership
- Diversify Membership and Board
- Enhance Member Benefits and Engagement
- Increase Meaningful Input from Patients
- Increase Recognition/Publicity