

Evolution of an Organization

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Once a branch of the Integrated Healthcare Policy Consortium, the ACCAHC is stepping out on its own.

The Academic Consortium for Complementary and Alternative Health Care (ACCAHC) has spread its wings, becoming an independent, dues-based nonprofit organization, rather than a branch of the Integrated Healthcare Policy Consortium (IHPC).

"For the first time in history, organizations representing all of the leading complementary health care professions have chosen to pay dues to an organization which will allow us to collaborate with each other and with conventional educators in advancing our missions," said ACCAHC Chair Reed Phillips, DC, PhD.

The ACCAHC was founded in March 2004 as an initiative of the IHPC and in the context of the National Education Dialogue to Advance Integrated Health Care: Creating Common Ground (NED). Funding to establish the group came courtesy of a single donor, Lucy Gonda. Initially, core participation consisted of representation by councils of colleges and accrediting agencies of the five disciplines with federally-recognized accrediting agencies (chiropractic, acupuncture and Oriental medicine, massage therapy, naturopathic medicine and direct-entry midwifery). The organization also has maintained a category of membership for "traditional world and emerging professions," such as yoga therapy and ayurvedic medicine.

In July 2006, ACCAHC member entities decided to formally begin a transition out from the IHPC and become a self-sustaining, dues-based organization. A dues structure was established with a suggested level of \$1,000-\$5,000 per year, based on the size of a member organization. The ACCAHC also clarified additional membership features. Certifying agencies of recognized professions would be invited as core members; mechanisms were clarified through which traditional world and emerging professions would be represented; and a single college membership category was created.

Membership solicitation began in 2006, with attention paid to the annual meeting dates and budget cycles of potential members. The following organizations have committed to becoming dues-paying members as of Jan. 1, 2007:

- Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine;
- Association of Chiropractic Colleges;
- American Massage Therapy Association - Council of Schools;
- Council on Naturopathic Medical Education;
- International Association of Yoga Therapists;
- Midwifery Education Accreditation Commission;
- National Certification Commission on Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine; and
- Four individual programs (2 AOM, 1 DC, 1 ND).

According to Dr. Phillips, the ACCAHC's move toward becoming an independent 501(c)3 charitable

organization is based on a business model that is part dues-based and part grants-based. "We know that the robust agenda developed by our member educators cannot be managed based on dues payments. We will seek focused grants and the assistance of some visionary philanthropists who can see how collaboration between educators of these disciplines can advance health care."

At the end of 2006, the group's founding donor, Gonda, donated \$30,000 toward a grant to support the work of the ACCAHC, noting that her donation honors the decision by the ACCAHC organizations to begin paying membership dues, as well as the hard work of the ACCAHC executive team.

Details have not been completely finalized, but the funds are expected to support four of the group's initiatives. The first initiative is a member retreat; the second is to help with the costs associated with the move to independence; the third is a booklet resource on each of the disciplines; and the fourth is a retreat in which a small, multidisciplinary group will begin, in an organized way, to explore new ways to approach some of the "hot spots" about which the ACCAHC member disciplines have sometimes been in conflict.

The group also is looking to fill the role of its executive director, as current director Pamela Snider, ND, has stepped down after three years. Dr. Snider received much praise for her work, a point Dr. Phillips emphasizes: "Pamela built a multidisciplinary team and a safe, disciplined, respectful, and exciting context for us to collaborate. That Pamela has pulled this off says a lot about what she has accomplished."

John Weeks, a close collaborator with Snider, along with being NED's founding director and the producer of the *Integrator Blog News & Reports*, succeeds her as interim director of the ACCAHC. "The whole ACCAHC group feels lucky to have John step in" during this transition, said Dr. Phillips.

Even though the ACCAHC has now become an independent organization, Dr. Phillips credits the IHPC with "laboring and giving birth to us." He also credits IHPC Executive Director Janet Kahn, PhD, and Board Chair Sheila Quinn, and anticipates continuing to work closely with the IHPC "to move policy changes that will create better health for the people we serve through advancing integrated health care."

For additional information about either of these organizations, visit www.ihpc.info and click on the ACCAHC link.

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