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President's *Message*

The American Academy of Audiology Student Organization—Why, and Why Now?

"I firmly believe that the Academy is on the right track." So begins a letter that I received last week from a student member of our organization. There is much interest and discussion, and many questions and inquiries as to how to volunteer, not to mention tremendous excitement, accompanying the announcement that the Academy is launching its own student organization. The excitement, enthusiasm, and interest in being part of the formation of the organization is gratifying and wonderful.

The question that has been asked by some is "why?" My response, in part, is "why not, and why didn't we do this long ago?" Perhaps there were good reasons why the founders decided to not initiate a student organization; however, 20 years later, it seems like a decision that is overdue.

So, why should we have an Academy student organization? An affiliated student organization is a standard offering in major professional organizations, and in this way, we have been a bit of an anomaly. I surveyed, randomly, five professional organizations via their Web sites, and here's what I learned: they all have directly affiliated student organizations.

The American Medical Association has its Medical Student Section, which was organized in 1950. The American Psychological Association has its APAGS—Association of Graduate Students—founded in 1988. It permits undergraduate members to join, and identifies its mission "to be the voice of psychology students within the APA and in the psychological community at large." The APAGS further states that it "establishes and maintains channels of communication between APAGS and schools, universities, training centers...(promotes)...leadership development, to represent all graduate study specialties of psychology and

facilitate exchange of information between these groups. Members of APAGS liaison with boards and committees..."

The American Dental Association has its ASDA, the American Optometric Association has its own AOSA, and the American Veterinary Association has its Student American Veterinary Medicine Association (SAVMA). The SAVMA was organized in 1969 to "enable what were once isolated student chapters to function effectively as a single unit on the national scene...the student AVMA coordinates student chapter functions, promotes the exchange of ideas and information among students, and represents its members in matters that concern them both as students and as future veterinarians".

WHAT DO THESE STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS IN OTHER PROFESSIONS HAVE IN COMMON? MANY THINGS!

- Elected, representative, student bodies with close ties to the parent organization.
- Benefits that are educational as well as monetary.
- Opportunities for leadership training and experience through mentoring, representation on committees, and in the organization's Board of Directors.
- Communication with students in other training programs through student publications and Web sites or listservs, and at national conventions.
- The list goes on and on, and the common thread is the relationship to the parent organization and the invaluable opportunity to experienced mentored leadership.

The American Academy of Audiology has long had a student membership category. While membership benefits are offered to students, the Academy has not organized this

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membership category in terms of communication, leadership development through elected representation, local (chapter or regional) representation, and formal ties to the Board of Directors and committee structure. These are some of the many areas that the task force on the development of the Academy student association is seeking to investigate, develop, and institute.

Audiology is experiencing a new era, with both positive developments and new challenges. With the AuD now firmly established as the entry-level professional degree, and becoming the standard for state licensure, and with the closing of all MA programs, we have achieved our goal of becoming a doctoring profession. At the same time, we have an ever-growing need to develop the research base for our profession, and to this end, our PhD students are critical for our growth and vitality. This brings new challenges in education and standards, as well as accreditation, and for these reasons, the Academy's Gold Standard in Audiology Education conference in January 2009 is of tremendous importance in codifying professional standards to permit the establishment of educational standards to be reflected in program accreditation.

Opportunities for leadership experiences and mentorship within the new student organization are great. As an example, the Academy is presently engaged in an effort to solicit old classic texts to be scanned into searchable PDFs. Many of the founders of our profession and our organization wrote these texts, and many are previous Jerger Career Awardees. Perhaps, as we reach out to these senior and retired experts to obtain books off their shelves, we can also invite them to participate in reaching out to students and providing a sense of the history and the beginnings of our profession. I was dismayed recently when a student at UCLA commented that she didn't know Dr. Donald Dirks, nor was she familiar with his work—and he is a (retired but still active) professor at UCLA!

So, what better way to celebrate our 20th Anniversary than to initiate our student organization? The question is not "why should we?" but "what are we waiting for?" As I have said, our students are critical to our future, and it is only appropriate to bestow on them the benefits, recognition, and position in the Academy that will be their professional home. 🎓

Our Students' Perspective

From Kristi Musser, Washington University of St. Louis (first year)

I think the new student organization is a fabulous step for the Academy to take, and I hope to see students receiving support from experienced audiologists as they pursue their educations. Not only will they provide opportunities for networking within the field, but it will help to ensure that a future generation of Academy leaders will hopefully hold the values held by current members and leaders in the field based on their interactions made possible through the new student org.

From Quintin Hecht, Illinois State University (first year)

I really enjoyed working with students from other schools as part of my volunteer experience at AudiologyNOW!

From Theresa DeSantis, Central Michigan University (third year)

Because of my volunteering experience at the Academy Store, I was able to chat with Dr. Richard Gans and a few other audiology students about the Academy and its relations with NAFDA. It was interesting to hear the inputs of a well-established and respected Academy member.