

APA Council Report

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'Crisitunity!'" was Homer Simpson's response when Lisa informed him that the Chinese use "the same word for 'crisis' as they do for 'opportunity.'" Crisis and opportunity are the dialectic which confronted us equally at APA Council this February. The crisis event demanding immediate attention is the economic environment which confronts many of us personally in our families, professionally in our places of employment, and collectively as the CPA and the APA. The opportunity is the new poignancy brought to our strategic planning processes, as we seek to re-define and reaffirm the purposes of APA and CPA, and seek to align our actions more closely with our highest mission, vision, values, and goals.

In his opening address, Dr. James Bray, APA President, started with enthusiasm for our potential. He asked us to counterbalance the existing fear and retreat mentality in our society with a "positive contagion virus." He framed his presidential initiative, and our opportunity as a profession, to proactively shape "the future of psychology." He asserted that we are at one of those crossroads moments in time when things are going to change, and we either, "catch the right wave and ride it," or try to ignore or out run it and get caught in the crush. He framed the positive possibilities as a combination of Strategic Planning (prioritization and re-alignment with our core values) and planning the Future of Psychology (transformation and catching the right wave that will propel us forward beyond where we are now as an organization). His primary presidential initiative, The Future of Psychology Summit to be held May 17-19 in Texas, will bring together psychologists, innovators, and invited guests from various constituencies. The summit will be a working meeting starting with visionary ideas, generation of new possibilities, and culminating in small work group identification of concrete next steps.

Dr. Norman Anderson followed him with a twofold message. First, we have to accept the sizeable impact the economic changes has had on the APA. The 2008 budget which Council approved last February predicted a surplus; however we are ending the year with a \$3.4 million deficit. Dr. Anderson, the Executive Management Group (EMG) and the central office staff responded quickly to propose \$10 million in cuts on the staff side, and asked Council to approve \$1.6 million in cuts to governance for the 2009 budget. With these revisions in place, the 2009 budget forecasts a \$309,000 surplus as a cushion against possibly even worsening circumstances. The staff cuts were accomplished in part by a hiring freeze with approximately 100 unfilled positions, and the EMG voluntarily declined raises for 2009 despite the fact that they will likely be working even harder. Council reluctantly and conscientiously approved the budget because several highly valued projects, meetings, and initiatives had to be postponed or canceled.

The second half of Dr. Anderson's message was this: strategic planning is key – this is THE time to determine priorities and use resources most effectively. Based on focus group meetings with various APA constituent groups and a review of our written

materials, a draft version of 5 major goals were presented to us to adopt for the next 3 to 5 years: 1) Promote excellent in psychology, 2) Expand the reach of psychology, 3) Increase the impact and perceived usefulness of psychology, 4) Improve membership satisfaction, and 5) Maximize organizational effectiveness for the 21st century. Later in the week-end we were asked to rank order and revise these 5 goals in small working groups. The final goal statements are still a work in progress, but we adopted the following *new Vision statement for APA*:

The American Psychological Association aspires to excel as a valuable, effective and influential organization advancing psychology as a science, serving as:

- *A uniting force for the discipline;*
- *The major catalyst for the stimulation, growth and dissemination of psychological science and practice;*
- *The primary resource for all psychologists;*
- *The premier innovator in the education, development, and training of psychological scientists, practitioners and educators;*
- *The leading advocate for psychological knowledge and practice informing policy makers and the public to improve public policy and daily living;*
- *A principal leader and global partner promoting psychological knowledge and methods to facilitate the resolution of personal, societal and global challenges in diverse, multicultural and international contexts; and*
- *An effective champion of the application of psychology to promote human rights, health, well being and dignity.*

In other voting actions, the council:

- Adopted updated Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations in Family Law Proceedings. <http://www.apa.org/practice/childcustody.pdf>
- Adopted as APA policy the Draft APA Resolution on Promotion of Healthy Active Lifestyles and Prevention of Obesity and Unhealthy Weight Control Behaviors in Children and Youth <http://www.apa.org/pi/cyf/policy-obesity.html> and <http://www.apa.org/pi/cyf/Prevent%20Childhood%20Obesity%20Article%20print%20version.pdf>
- Postponed action on proposals to reduce the costs of dues for some members including state, provincial and territorial association members, due to the restraints on the 2009 and 2010 budgets.
- Received the report of the Task Force for Increasing the Number of Quantitative Psychologists.
- Established a continuing Committee on Human Research.
- Received the final report of the Div. 19 (Military) and Div. 44 (Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Issues) Joint Task Force on Sexual Orientation and Military Experience
- Approved amendment of the APA Bylaws to ensure that all Divisions and SPTA's have a seat on Council using the proportional allocation system, in the unlikely event that the number of votes allocated to either is insufficient to yield enough seats to seat all Divisions and SPTAs.

One of the controversies of the August Council meeting was resolved when Council voted to make the results of last fall's membership vote in support of a petition resolution related to the role of psychologists in national security detention settings official APA policy. The petition resolution prohibits psychologists from working in settings where people are held outside of, or in violation of, either International Law or the U.S. Constitution. The only exceptions to this prohibition are in cases in which a psychologist is working directly for the person being detained, for an independent third party working to protect human rights or providing treatment to military personnel.

According to the association rules, action on a petition is not complete until the association's "next annual meeting" in August. However, the council voted to suspend that rule to complete action on the petition. The council also adopted a title for the petition, "Psychologists and Unlawful Detention Settings with a Focus on National Security" in an effort to clarify the scope of the petition. The petition resolution is not intended to be applied broadly to jails, all detention centers or psychiatric hospitals. In a related action, the council also received the report of the Presidential Advisory Group on the Implementation of the Petition Resolution and forwarded the report to relevant APA boards and committees for their review and action. The council also directed APA's Central Office to include information in its regular reports to the council and Board of Directors about steps taken to implement the petition resolution as proposed in the advisory group report.

The new issue of heated contention is the lawsuit being pressed by the APA against the APA Insurance Trust (APAIT) due to the APAIT's refusal to release information that the APA has determined, and been advised by outside legal counsel, that it needs to adequately discharge its oversight duty in relation to the APAIT. The APA official statement on the issue is as follows:

The APAIT was created by the APA Board in 1962 to provide insurance benefits to APA members. APAIT carries APA's name and also enjoys preferential access to APA's membership lists to market its products. The APA Board has duties to protect the use of APA's name, to monitor how APA assets are used by commercial entities, and to assess on behalf of its membership the performance of APA member benefits. In addition, the APA Board has important responsibilities under the Trust Agreement that governs APAIT, including approving extended terms of service by trustees, approving initial terms of service for trustees, approving proposed amendments to the Trust Agreement, initiating removal of a trustee and so on. The information the APA Board seeks is important to discharge all these duties and responsibilities. In addition, as a beneficiary of the trust, APA is entitled to access to financial and other performance related data about the Trust.

APA has asked the court to rule on the narrow question of its rights to access financial and other business performance information from APAIT. This action became necessary because the APA and APAIT Boards have received differing

legal opinions concerning their duties vis-à-vis monitoring APAIT performance and the protection of proprietary information.

If the APA wins the lawsuit:

Regardless of the court's decision, the outcome should not affect the insurance products offered by APAIT, APAIT benefits to members, or insurance rates. If the court rules in APA's favor, the APA Board of Directors would then have access to the financial information it needs to fully execute its responsibilities to monitor APAIT's performance.

If APA loses the lawsuit:

The APA Board would then have assurance from the court that APA's judgments and responsibilities with regard to APAIT are limited due to its lack of authority to have access to APAIT's financial and other business information. If APA loses the lawsuit, there would be a reassessment of APA's relationship with APAIT and in particular an evaluation of the best means to protect members who purchase products, such as insurance, as a result of access to APA's membership lists.

It is not expected that the lawsuit will cause insurance premiums to rise:

The APA Board has carefully framed the issue before the court to be a narrow one involving only whether APAIT has to provide specific financial and related information to APA. APA has not sought damages against APAIT. APAIT has answered the complaint and filed a counterclaim seeking a declaration that it is under no obligation to provide any financial and other information. Therefore, the lawsuit can be litigated without expenditure of large legal fees, which is the manner in which APA intends to proceed. While APA cannot control the action of APAIT, it is hoped that APAIT's approach will be the same.

Informational agenda items included the upcoming annual conference in Toronto and the Council's annual cultural competency presentation. Regarding the conference, Dr. Bray is proposing a change in format and content to include a "convention within the convention (CWC)." For the last number of years, the APA Divisions have had programming control of 95% of the conference time. However, greater than 50% of the members of APA do not belong to a division. For the 2009 Toronto conference the CWC themes will include:

- Health
- Methodology
- Evidence Based Practice
- Child/Family
- Neuroscience/psychology
- Business of Practice
- Incarceration
- Famous psychologists

In order to bring practical psychological information to the community in which the conference occurs, Thursday will be a “community day.” This year the community day focus will be on the role of family in preventing and adapting to HIV/AIDS. Experts from the NIMH will provide workshops for community leaders in Toronto. In future years psychologists will be asked to provide help and expertise to the community wherever conference occurs.

This year’s diversity training was on aging. For resources and to learn more, go the APA Public Interest web page on aging www.apa.org/pi/aging Dr. Gregory Hinrichsen and Dr. Becca Levy guided us through a presentation on the particular cultural and psychological challenges of aging in our society. First, after reviewing the many “slang” names in use, which characterize various stereotypes and negative impressions about aging, we were informed that “older adult” is the currently accepted phrase. We were also informed that ethnic minority individuals constitute the majority of older adults, and that minority individuals are more vulnerable to discrimination as they age. The speakers asserted that the negative stereotypes in our society are roughly the same for age, disability, loss of function, and chronic illness. Furthermore, negative stereotypes of aging have been shown in several studies to have measurable negative impact on functioning. One study showed that memory declined with exposure to negative stereotypes whereas subjects exposed to positive stereotypes of aging demonstrated improvement in memory functions. A similar relationship was found between exposure to stereotypes and systolic blood pressure measurements. The Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging, the longest running study of human aging, found that young people with more positive images of aging later had first cardiovascular events on average 8 years later than their peers with negative impressions of aging. Current estimates are that 1% of older adults meet criteria for major depression. In addition, rates of suicide for older white men are higher than the rates for young adults.

This was my third APA Council of Representatives meeting, and I have found each to be a rich experience. The representatives take seriously our charge to represent both our individual constituencies and the best interests of the APA as a whole. If you have followed the link and read to the end of this article, you have demonstrated a strong interest in the actions of Council. If you would like to know more, please follow the links I have included on particular topics, or contact me at kaley-isley.lisa@tchden.org I represent you as a liaison to the APA and my goal is to communicate both ways the interests and actions of our members. Thank-you for allowing me to serve you and thereby experience first hand the multidimensional perspectives that a room full of psychologists bent on service can bring to each and every issue. I have gained an even greater appreciation for the wisdom of our scientists and practitioners and the complexity of our endeavors.