

AAHB Is the Mouthpiece of the Health Behavior Research Community

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It is an unusual and rare privilege for me to have the opportunity to speak to you all from this podium as the new president of AAHB. AAHB is evolving rapidly now in its efforts to protect and inform our understanding of verbal and nonverbal behavior. We are dancing to the music of a transdisciplinary-translation matrix revolution with its own lens extending from the globe to the components of the atom.

Verbal and nonverbal behavior remains essential ingredients in the explanation, prediction, and control of any health enterprise, with the ability to alter neurotransmission, thought processes, and environmental experiences. Behavioral lifestyle factors remain the major outcomes of morbidity concerns. Medications and gene snips, fMRIs and cortisol levels, do not bypass our need to understand or manipulate behavior. They simply enrich our ability to gain mastery over health behavior. In fact, we are engaged in a great new wedding of research communities.

Since its inception, AAHB has been a place to convene thoughtful people who discuss health behavior research issues.

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However, the eventual true mission of AAHB is more than that. It is to serve as the mouthpiece of the health behavior research community. To fulfill that mission we see 3 main issues or goals that require our attention.

First, as part of our standard operating procedure, after beginning with roots emanating from specific health disciplines, we finally state our commitment more broadly as the home of excellence in health behavior research and applications to practice. That is, AAHB is an organization that is nested within one or more other organizations that more broadly pertain to health and disease (such as public health). In addition, AAHB nests within it conceptually specific arenas of health behavior research as might be reflected in more specialized organization (such as prevention, cessation, education, community, or neuro-behavior). Our organizational clarity has been an issue which we can now place to rest.

Second, stemming from the first goal, we should desire to serve not only as a meritocracy but also as a means to motivate excellence in health behavior research among all health behavior researchers. In other words, we are not here to pat each other on the back but to hold out a helping hand to bridge a future that maximizes our understanding, prediction, and control of behavior so as to be at the service of the individual and social good. As such, it is imperative for the organization to reach out and grow. Now we are about 150 total members strong. We need to grow to 500 total members to be able to have a solid academy balance. There is no other solution to achieve

financial and academic security for our organization. It is only through growth that we can maintain an organization that can be supported by us and that can support our larger goals. Certainly, this growth should occur in a systematic fashion such that we maintain a high-quality stance toward health behavior research. If we aim for approximately 50 new members per year, the pace of growth would not be too rapid for us to manage.

There are at least 2 targets to think about in terms of growth of the Academy: regular and affiliate members. Of course, we need to reach out to health behavior researchers across all imaginable disciplines. There is no need to limit these disciplines. We should recruit from the social, behavioral, educational, and biomedical sciences. We should aim for at least 250 regular members.

Also, though, affiliate members, I believe, are a major means for the organization to grow. It is very important to grow this base. Currently we have about 25 affiliate members. Requirements for affiliate membership include 2 data-based peer-reviewed papers already published in journals of national or international

distribution that typically report original research findings. Affiliate members are, for the most part, new professionals and graduate students. They pay the \$160 per year membership fee. They receive the journal but do not vote or hold office. Regular members should recruit, subsidize, and mentor these affiliate members and help them to become regular members. There should probably be as many affiliate members as regular members. Affiliate members should become "charged up" to become regular members.

The third major issue is this. We need to try to remove any appearance of belonging to any particular discipline or of being composed of any specific demographic group, or of appearing in any way to suggest operation of an oligopoly. Our president-elect is a woman; thank our higher powers. We need to move for more diversity. In return we will learn so much. This diversity does not need to even be "American." This diversity should be international more and more. Certainly, involvement of a lot of people removes the fallback position of operation by a few people that care. Let's all get involved in AAHB and carve out a solid future.