

Possible Selves and Proximal Goals for the Academy

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As the American Academy of Health Behavior (Academy) approaches its 10th year of existence, the members can be proud of how far it has come in so short a period of time. The Academy has become an important and productive organization that is now well recognized and integrated into the community of health behavior organizations. In less than 10 years, the Academy has carved out a special niche that is well articulated by our mission statement: "The mission of the American Academy of Health Behavior is to serve as the research home for health behavior scholars whose primary commitment is to excellence in research and the application of research to practice." (Check out the mission statement and other information on the Academy website at <http://www.aahb.org/>.)

The first annual meeting I attended was in 2003 and I was very impressed that the program included speakers who were among the best in the field. I liked that the Academy was devoted to the principle of meritocracy, the members were dedicated to excellence in health behavior research, and merit guided the development of the annual meeting program and

other activities. I identified with the group of Founding and Charter Members (Table 1) and was totally impressed with the Laureates (Table 2). Very soon I decided to make the Academy my primary professional organization, while continuing to affiliate with a number of other professional groups.

Whereas the Academy can now be viewed as a prominent and successful organization, it is relatively new. Now may be a good time to reflect on the nature, purpose, and activities of the organization. Viewed from a developmental perspective, the Academy is 9 years old, and the natural course of development among 9-year-olds is to ask fundamental questions about the nature of existence, such as Who am I? How am I unique? What are my possible selves? I don't know the answers to these questions, or even if complete answers are possible. However, I believe that asking questions such as these may be useful at this point in the Academy's journey. Therefore, I pose these questions to all Academy members and ask that you weigh in when asked about them in a forthcoming membership survey. Meanwhile, as I launch my year as President, I plan to seek the advice of the Founding and Charter Members, Academy laureates, and other interested members. Moreover, I plan to rely heavily on the capable guidance of the 2006 Academy leaders (Table 3).

What are the possible selves of the Academy? The Academy's future self may be best understood in terms of a subjective evaluation of how well we have done with respect to our mission. Specifically, we should ask, "How well are we filling our

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Table 1
Founding and Charter Members of the American Academy of Health Behavior (Founded 4/1/97)

FOUNDING MEMBERS (N=33)

Elbert D. Glover, PhD (Founder)
 David R. Black, PhD, MPH
 David F. Duncan, DrPH
 Mark B. Dignan, PhD, MPH
 James M. Eddy, DED
 John P. Foreyt, PhD
 Stuart W. Fors, EdD
 Robert S. Gold, PhD
 Lawrence W. Green, DrPH
 Nicholas K. Iammarino, PhD
 Mark J. Kittleson, PhD
 Molly T. Laflin, PhD
 Scott J. Leischow, PhD
 Beverly S. Mahoney, RN, PhD
 Terri Mulkins Manning, EdD
 Robert J. McDermott, PhD
 Kenneth R. McLeroy, PhD

Ian M. Newman, PhD
 Melody Noland, PhD
 Thomas W. O'Rourke, PhD, MPH
 Cheryl L. Perry, PhD
 Rick A. Petosa, PhD
 James H. Price, PhD, MPH
 Cheryl J. Rainey, PhD
 Paul Sarvela, PhD
 Mary S. Sutherland, EdD, MPH
 Mohammad R. Torabi, PhD, MPH
 Ray Tricker, PhD
 Robert F. Valois, PhD, MPH
 Min Qi Wang, PhD
 Robert M. Weiler, PhD, MPH
 Chudley E. Werch, PhD
 Michael Young, PhD

CHARTER MEMBERS (n=17)

Randall L. Cottrell, DED, CHES
 Patricia C. Dunn, PhD
 Michael W. Felts, PhD
 Eugene C. Fitzhugh, PhD
 Gregory H. Frazer, PhD
 Jennie J. Kronenfeld, PhD
 Karen D. Liller, PhD
 Patricia D. Mail, MPH, PhD, FSfAA
 Mary A. Nies, PhD, RN, FAAN

Ansa Ojanlatva, PhD
 Lynda B. Ransdell, PhD
 John P. Sciacca, PhD
 David A. Sleet, PhD
 Susan K. Telljohann, HSD
 Stephen B. Thomas, PhD
 Dennis L. Thombs, PhD
 Mark G. Wilson, HSD

niche and how should the Academy proceed to best fulfill our mission?" I would suggest that the Academy has begun to fill its niche by establishing a stable membership and consistently organizing high-quality programs. However, it may be that we can do even better.

As is common in research and practice, even without complete answers to the basic questions, focusing carefully on goals often suggests the best methods and activities. In my view, the most important and pressing goals for the Academy are to maintain the high quality of our annual meetings, grow larger, and establish financial stability.

Academy Goals for 2006-2007

I propose the following goals for the next year as a means of giving proximal focus to our activities.

Goal #1: Plan and implement an excellent 2007 annual meeting.

The annual meeting is the Academy's most visible activity and one of the principal means of accomplishing its mis-

Table 2
American Academy of Health Behavior Research Laureates

Year	Laureate
2000	Lawrence W. Green, DrPH
2002	Brian R. Flay, PhD
2003	John P. Elder, PhD
2004	Cheryl L. Perry, PhD
2005	Stephen Y. Sussman, PhD
2006	Herbert H. Severson, PhD

Table 3
American Academy of Health Behavior Leadership, 2006-2007

Office	Leader
President	Bruce Simons-Morton, EdD National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
Immediate Past President	David R. (Randy) Black, PhD Purdue University
President-Elect	Stephen Y. Sussman, PhD University of Southern California
Secretary	Molly T. Laffin, PhD Bowling Green University
Treasurer	Lorraine Silver Wallace, PhD University of Tennessee Medical Center
Delegate 1	Karen D. Liller, PhD University of South Florida
Delegate 2	Joan E. Cowdery, PhD University of Michigan at Flint
Delegate 3	Rita D. Debate, PhD Old Dominion University
Membership	Robert J. McDermott, PhD University of South Florida
Professional Development	David W. Seal, PhD Medical College of Wisconsin
Resource Development	Dennis L. Thombs, PhD University of Florida
Communication & Marketing	Cheryl J. Dye, PhD University of South Carolina
Program	R. Scott Olds, PhD Kent State University

sion. By all indications, each of our past annual meetings has been excellent. I hope to continue in this tradition and build on our past success. Therefore, we plan again this year to bring together a stellar group of presenters on topics of genuine interest and importance to a wide range of behavioral scientists. We plan to hold the meeting in an attractive location and create a spirit of inclusion so that all who attend benefit not only from the presentations but also from extensive interaction with other conference attendees. We also hope to attract at least the usual 120 attendees. The 2007 Program Chair, Scott Olds, and his committee are off to an excellent start on developing the 2007 program, which takes as its theme, "Multilevel Approaches to the Study of Health Behavior."

Goal #2: Increase membership.

Currently, the Academy has 150 members, including 40 Fellows. The advan-

tages of a small membership are that each voice can be heard and there is a real sense of intimacy within the organization. However, I believe that a membership of 150 is too small for the long-term viability and productivity of the Academy. A modest but steady increase in membership would provide greater financial stability, provide a new infusion of talent, and improve functioning. Indeed, there are a lot of health behavior researchers and practitioners who would benefit from being a part of the Academy. I propose that the Academy develop a strategy that would enable it to grow by at least 15 members a year for the next decade, toward the eventual goal of 250-500 members total. Robert McDermott, a founding member of the Academy, former President, long-time leader, and now Membership Chair, plans to create a systematic and personalized membership recruitment plan for this year. Bob is the perfect person to lead this undertaking because of his

Table 4
Some Things Members Can Do for the
American Academy of Health Behavior

- * Recruit at least one member this year
- * Attend the next annual meeting
- * Submit a paper or poster to the next annual meeting
- * Run for office
- * Vote
- * Volunteer for a committee
- * Voice your opinions and share your ideas
- * Check out the website regularly
- * Make a financial contribution

wide-ranging skills, long-term commitment to the Academy, and his sensitivity to the need for maintaining the spirit of the Academy, even as we grow.

Goal #3: Increase revenue generation.

Over the past few years, the Academy's annual income has been about \$60,000 per year, and expenses have averaged a little over \$50,000. With the resignation of Dr Terri Manning as Executive Director, effective in June 2006, and the hiring of Dr Lori Marks to take her place, the anticipated expenses for 2006 will increase to \$60,000 or more. Over the years, the Academy has been able to generate a surplus of about \$30,000, now held in interest-bearing CDs. However, prudent financial planning suggests that an organization should have savings equivalent to at least a year's operating budget. In addition to increased financial stability, additional revenue would provide opportunities for new and improved initiatives. It would be great to have enough money to provide selected scholarships to the annual meeting, pay for keynote speakers, increase the number of awards and other forms of member recognition, in-

crease the percent time of our executive director (now at 20-25% FTE), and undertake other beneficial initiatives. For these endeavors we need to generate additional income. There are a variety of possible ways of increasing revenue, including growing our membership, attracting conference grant support, and developing some marketable products.

What You Can Do for the Academy

The Academy is made up of a small number of members, and each member's contribution is vitally important and wholly welcome. I ask that you make a small contribution of some sort to the Academy so that it can further develop its activities. A partial list of things that you can do to help the Academy to fulfill its mission is included in Table 4. These may seem like small things, but I think they can make a real difference. In particular, think about why you are a member of the Academy and share this with at least one other person who you think would enjoy and benefit from membership. I welcome the opportunity to work with you over the course of the next year and beyond to advance the mission of the Academy. ■