ASHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING REPORT

ASHA's Board of Directors (BOD) met virtually on January 22 and 23, 2021. Following are highlights of the Board's discussions.

PRESIDENT’S OPENING REMARKS
President A. Lynn Williams convened the BOD meeting at 10 a.m. ET on January 22, 2021, and welcomed the Board members.

In addition to the new Board members, former Advisory Council Chairs, Barbara Goodson and Charles Bishop, were welcomed in their new positions as the two new At Large Board Members after having transitioned from the Advisory Council Chairs to the new positions on January 1, 2021. This transition is a result of the membership approval of bylaws resolution BOD 1-2020 to sunset the Advisory Councils (ACs) in March 2020 and create the two new BOD positions, the Board Member at Large in Audiology and the Board Member at Large in Speech-Language Pathology. Goodson and Bishop will remain in these two seats until elections are held for these positions in 2021 (Audiology) and 2022 (Speech-Language Pathology) and their successors terms begin.

CEO UPDATE REPORT
In addition to providing the written summary with the pre-meeting materials, Chief Executive Officer Arlene Pietranton welcomed Donna Smiley, CCC-AUD as ASHA’s new Chief Staff Officer for Audiology and shared the following with the BOD:

Future of Learning
The learning systems consultant engaged to conduct an overview of the future readiness of ASHA’s learning-related programs has completed interviews with selected representatives from the 500+ other CSD CE providers and from key state regulatory boards/agencies regarding the state regulatory environment related to licensure and CE requirements. A member perspectives survey was fielded to a representative subset of ASHA members on December 1, 2020; the results are currently being analyzed.

Based on the consultant’s review to date, six initial lines of inquiry have been identified for more in-depth exploration (i.e., no specific conclusions or recommendations have been reached at this time):

1. Shifting from a CE-centric (completing the activity and earning the credits) to a learning-centric (what does the learner need to learn, and when and how) approach
2. Development of competency-based approaches
3. Expanded workforce development focus
4. Improvement of learning technology infrastructure
5. Coordinated communications about the value of learning (tailored messages highlighting the multifaceted and career-spanning ways that ASHA helps members learn and grow)
6. Formalization of a cross-program working group/workplan.
Assistants Certification
After a 3-year development process, ASHA’s assistant certification program launched as planned in December 2020. One hundred applications for the new program have already been received, and several applicants have passed the examination and become certified. The exam is available at Prometric testing centers (same centers as the Praxis) and through Prometric’s online live remote proctoring testing system, which meets the security standards established by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) that accredits ASHA’s certification programs. The latest information is available at www.ashaassistants.org or by emailing assistants@asha.org.

Some 2020 Operational Highlights
For all, 2020 was obviously a unique year with many changes, challenges, and disruptions. It was also a year of remarkable resiliency and adaptation for countless ASHA members and volunteer leaders—and for ASHA staff. The following small sampling of some of the examples of carrying on, adapting, growth, and innovation was shared with the Board members:

- All ASHA committees/boards/councils and ad hoc committee meetings went virtual—and all staff ex officios became Zoom aficionados.
- SIGs had virtual open houses for the first (but probably not the last) time.
- Association Governance Operations supported communications and processes for two Bylaws changes (sunsetting the Advisory Councils; moving to hybrid elections), and 104 Early Career Professional (ECP) awards were given out in 2020 (the last time the award was given was 2018—when only 18 ECP awards were given).
- The ASHA Learning Pass launched in 2020 … and then quickly pivoted to provide free access to all ASHA members for 3 months, during which more than 76,000 unique learners engaged in over 800,000 hours of continuing professional education.
- ASHA Leader page visits increased by more than 1 million in 2020 over 2019; the Leader went from producing two or three blog posts per week to four or five blogs per week and launched the “Everyday Ethics” blog series.
- Audiology practices staff addressed issues related to “essential services,” held an Audiology Townhall with ~500 participants, and highlighted and created dozens of time-sensitive telepractice and COVID-related resources.
- SLP Practices staff fielded more than 7,000 technical assistance calls, held numerous chats and Town Hall events, and highlighted and created dozens of time-sensitive telepractice COVID-related resources.
- Several Issues in Ethics Statements (IES) were developed or updated on timely topics, including Ethical Use of Social Media and Delivery of Care in Public Health and Safety Emergencies. A special new resource, “Prohibitions Against Discrimination Under ASHA’s Code of Ethics and Enforcement by the Board of Ethics,” was developed in response to a BOD request.
- The Interstate Compact was launched—and adopted in six states (10 states are needed to activate the Compact).
- The CE Provider application went online; more applicants were received than in any previous year.
- ASHA’s scholarly journals published nearly 900 articles (more than ever before) and continued to reduce the turnaround time from submission to publication.
• Member Surveys and Analysis transitioned to online focus groups, conducted three all member COVID “pulse” surveys, and fielded more than 100 other surveys and information gathering efforts throughout 2020.

• The Action Center team went all remote literally overnight—even though no one on that team had ever worked remotely for ASHA before. They handled 15,418 calls in 2020 (compared to 11,923 calls in 2019) and averaged a 20 second hold time (compared to an average 40 second hold time in 2019).

• ASHA’s LinkedIn audience grew by 30%; audience growth on Instagram increased by nearly 20%.

• Digital Communications created a COVID-19 landing page (with a direct link from any ASHA website page) that was accessed by more than 300,000 people, with 155,000 people accessing the telepractice content.

• The *ASHA Now* e-newsletter served as a vehicle to consolidate and help push out time-sensitive pandemic-related information for members, with an open rate during the early months that spiked from 26% to 45%.

• Staff whose “usual” workload was decreased due to the pandemic were deployed during their available time to other areas, such as Facilities staff who helped Government Affairs and Public Policy with communications and Digital Communications with social media, and such as administrative assistants who helped ASHA Professional Development (APD) with hours and hours of transcription of various APD offerings that would otherwise have been outsourced.

• ASHA Connect (Schools Connect, Health Care Connect, and Private Practice Connect) 2020 was transformed and conducted fully virtual. With 59 recorded presentations and 23 live sessions, totaling more than 110 hours of educational content, it was the largest online conference ASHA has ever offered, featuring 48 poster presentations, a large and active virtual event hall, and a pop-up ASHA store. It was also the most well-attended single online conference ASHA has ever offered, with over 1,200 registered attendees.

• Convention was cancelled for only the second time in ASHA’s history (the other time was in 1943 due to WWII).

**Certification Administration**

As a result of the January 1, 2020, Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) standards changes, there was a surge of certification applications in 2019 and a corresponding drop in 2020. When the 2019 and 2020 application numbers are combined, approximately 30% more applicants were received than from 2014 and 2015, which was the year of and year after the last SLP standards change. While audiology applications were down from 2019, 100 more were received than in 2018 or any other year since the AuD became the degree requirement. As a result of the surge of 2019 graduates who completed their Clinical Fellowships in 2020, more certifications were awarded than any other year in ASHA’s history.

As a result of the pandemic, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) began offering the Audiology and SLP Praxis exams through online live remote proctoring. ETS did an analysis of in-person versus online test results, which confirmed that there was no significant difference in pass rate or scores between those who took the exam online or in person. ETS will continue to monitor these data through the coming year.
Despite the challenges of the pandemic, annual retention of ASHA certificate holders remains extremely high at over 98.25%, including 96% of CCC-As. Completion of the 2018–2020 certification maintenance interval remains on track with previous years/intervals despite the cancellation of most in-person education/learning in 2020.

FIDUCIARY DUTIES REVIEW
Christine Gattuso, an attorney with the law firm Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP (ASHA’s legal counsel), reviewed the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of BOD members. ASHA’s BOD is provided with this review at the beginning of each year to ensure that BOD members fully understand the responsibilities of serving on the board of an organization of ASHA’s size and complexity.

STRATEGIC PATHWAY UPDATE
Vice President for Planning Craig Coleman was joined by the Chief Staff Officer for Multicultural Affairs Vicki Deal-Williams and Director of the Office of Business Excellence Rozsa Felix to present an update on ASHA’s Strategic Pathway to Excellence. The update had four segments.

The first and second segments focused on the review of the Strategic Objectives’ Annual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The KPIs are short-term performance metrics that track, monitor, and assess the success of a major objective/focus area for the year. The Strategic Objective Owners each identified one to three KPIs for 2020 and the statuses of these KPIs at the end of the year 2020 were reported to the Board in the first segment. The second segment focused on the introduction of the new 2021 KPIs.

In the third segment of the update, major accomplishments were reported for all of the eight Strategic Objectives. Information about the work underway and a more detailed description of all accomplishments to date can be found on ASHA.org: Strategic Pathway to Excellence: Strategic Objective Highlights, which is updated biannually.

The fourth and final segment of the update focused on the outcomes of the “2020 Confirming the Relevance of the Current Strategic Plan” activities. In 2020, many activities with several stakeholder groups were completed that helped the Board determine whether ASHA is appropriately addressing our current priorities, whether we are considering the right future trends, and what, if any, adjustment may need to be made to the current strategic plan. The new iteration of the Strategic Pathway to Excellence map was also shared.

MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP SATISFACTION TREND DATA
Director of Surveys and Analysis Sarah Slater provided an update to the BOD on ASHA membership trends, retention, and satisfaction data. The Association continues to experience healthy growth in the number of professionals affiliating. At the end of 2019, ASHA represented 211,000 individuals, with the overall retention rate being 98.2% (96.3% for audiologists and 98.5% for SLPs). ASHA acts on member feedback in ways to increase member satisfaction, such as highlighting the value of ASHA certification through the ashacertified.org campaign and other advocacy efforts. The Association’s official 2020 membership counts will be available by March 2021.
**BOD 1-2021: AMEND ARTICLE X OF THE ASHA BYLAWS**
The Board of Directors considers bylaws changes on an as-needed basis, but no more than quarterly each year. One change to the bylaws was considered by the Board during this meeting. **BOD 1-2021 (Amend Article X, Discrimination).** Edits expanding the dimensions of diversity and the way they are listed provide a more inclusive description of the bases on which discrimination should not occur, ensure consistency across ASHA policy, and present the dimensions of diversity in alphabetical order to eliminate the perception that any one dimension of diversity is more important than another when it comes to discrimination. The BOD approved resolution BOD 1-2021 to include a greater range of dimensions of diversity and to list them in alphabetical order.

**EVIDENCE-BASED CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES**
Chief Staff Officer for Science and Research Margaret Rogers and Director of ASHA’s National Center on Evidence-Based Practice Rob Mullen updated the Board on the two ongoing “proof-of-concept” projects to develop evidence-based clinical practice guidelines. One guideline will address cognitive rehabilitation for adults with acquired brain injury, while the other will address the provision of aural rehabilitation services to adults with hearing loss. ASHA staff and interdisciplinary panels of stakeholders are nearing the completion of meta-analyses of the evidence for each topic, after which the panels are slated to begin the development of specific recommendations to be included in each guideline.

**POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND THE 2021 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA**
Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy Jeffrey P. Regan gave an informational presentation that touched on the following topics: What does the 2021 political landscape look like? What impact have the elections and recent political uprisings had on the new Administration, Congress, and the states? What issues are expected to be debated in Washington and in state capitals nationwide? How will these issues impact ASHA members? What strategies is ASHA undertaking on behalf of the professions?

**GENERATIVE DISCUSSION: DECLINING TRUST**
ASHA’s BOD engages in generative discussions at each BOD meeting. These discussions are intended to engage the Board in deliberations that inform their decision-making and help to define issues and frame challenges. At this meeting, a generative discussion was held with regard to declining trust. As the public’s trust in institutions—including government, media, science, and medicine—falls, there are social, political, and economic implications with consequences for education, health care, and business. The Board discussed this trend, projections, and the potential impact on the professions as well as the Association.

**FINANCIAL REVIEW**
Vice President for Finance Ann (Bernadette) Mayfield-Cla rke presented ASHA’s financial update. She reported on the preliminary December 31, 2020, report, which showed total operating revenue of $59,301,635 and total operating expenses of $54,919,596, equating to preliminary net revenue (revenue minus expenses) of $4,383,039. It was reported that the final audit report will be completed by May. As a 501(c)6 non-profit organization, any revenue over expense that ASHA has at the end of a budget year must go, according to accounting requirements, into the
organization’s reserves where it can be accessed for future special initiatives (such as supporting the work of the Strategic Objectives) or to help make up for a revenue shortfall in a future budget year.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES PROCESS
The BOD has been working intentionally to increase the diversity of committees, boards, and councils with regard to dimensions such as age, profession, gender, employment setting, and number of individuals from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds. President-Elect Judy Rich and Chief Staff Officer for Multicultural Affairs Vicki Deal-Williams reviewed the commitments that the BOD has made and their potential to impact outcomes in appointments the Board members will make later this year for vacancies on committees, boards, and councils that begin in 2022. The BOD revisited their diversity goals, and Board members were urged to build on the progress and momentum of their efforts over the past 5 years by encouraging individuals across a variety of dimensions of diversity to submit requests for consideration via the Committee/Board Interest Form, including individuals who are early career professionals, those from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds, former officers of National NSSLHA, and those who have participated in ASHA’s leadership development programs (the Leadership Development Program [LDP] and the Minority Student Leadership Program [MSLP]).

REVIEW OF BOD OPERATING PROCEDURES
President A. Lynn Williams and Chief Executive Officer Arlene Pietranton reviewed the BOD operating procedures, including BOD responsibilities in the areas of planning, operations, audit, and communications; guidelines for conducting business via an asynchronous electronic meeting; relationship of the BOD to the National Office staff; policies restricting BOD members in being elected, appointed, or selected for a BOD office in any year during which they serve on the BOD; voting guidelines for BOD resolutions and motions; and the process to be followed should a BOD member have a conflict of interest.

Q&A SESSION
The following topics were posted prior to the BOD meeting for review by each BOD member, with the opportunity to provide feedback or have questions answered during the BOD meeting.

Audiology Subcommittee Report
The BOD Audiology Subcommittee met virtually prior to the BOD meeting. Board Member at Large in Audiology Charles Bishop served as the facilitator of the meeting.

Anticipated opportunities and challenges for Audiology in 2021 (Bishop)
For 2021 and beyond, the Audiology Subcommittee will add recurring themes to their monthly agendas focusing on the anticipated challenges, risks, changes, and opportunities facing the audiology profession. Suggested topics presently include Medicare Audiology Access Services Act (MAASA), telehealth services, over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids, COVID-19 issues, state of graduate education, and audiology assistant certification. Additional topics will be included throughout the year.

Update from AQC
The Audiology Quality Consortium (AQC) is a group of audiology organizations that worked with Healthmonix to accomplish the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System
The MIPS replaced the Physician Quality Reporting System (PQRS) on January 1, 2017. It is one of two quality payment options implemented by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The CMS approved the MIPS quality indicators that are going out for testing. CMS have approved the MIPS measure for benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV) but did not approve the MIPS measure for cerumen management. The group hopes to revise this in the future and seek approval again.

**Update to the CAPCSD task group for final year externship to date**

Vice President for Academic Affairs in Audiology Julie Honaker updated the Audiology Subcommittee on her recent interactions with a group of audiology externship coordinators and individuals from academic programs who discussed a need for a more standardized externship process (e.g., timeline for interviews/acceptance, etc.,) between academic programs and clinical sites. As a member of the CAPCSD Audiology Externship Task force, she provided a brief summary on the AuD Education Summit Task Force and formation of the working group to discuss the need for a national database of clinical externship sites and standardization to the application process.

**AAA Virtual 2021 Update**

The Audiology BOD members, as follows, plan to register as exhibitors at the American Academy of Audiology 2021 Virtual Conference, April 14–17, 2021: Board Member At Large in Audiology Charles Bishop, Vice President for Academic Affairs Julie Honaker, Vice President for Standards and Ethics in Audiology Valeria Matlock, and Vice President for Audiology Practice Sharon Sandridge.

**Speech-Language Pathology Subcommittee Report**

The BOD Speech-Language Pathology Subcommittee met prior to the BOD Meeting with Board Member At Large in Speech-Language Pathology Barbara Goodson facilitating.

The Speech-Language Pathology Subcommittee has met twice since the last (October 2020) BOD meeting. During the December 8, 2020, meeting, the topic was how women in the workforce have been affected by the pandemic. Findings were presented documenting women leaving the profession and others due to the need to become childcare/education providers for their families, taking early retirement, or leaving due to choosing not to work in a high-risk COVID environment. Further discussion centered around the many research projects that have been put on hold, and the concern that it may negatively impact an already existing shortage of PhDs. Clinical preparation remains challenging during the pandemic, especially for students who have not been able to do as much face-to-face practicum work as hoped or intended. Finding placements that will accept student clinicians is challenging right now, and it is important to recognize that other placements may need to pull out of agreements by mid-Spring. It was also discussed how COVID has accelerated a number of changes in the profession, such as the use of more telehealth and reimbursement for telehealth services.
An update was also provided on the transition from the Speech-Language Pathology Advisory Council to the Committee on Ambassadors on January 1, 2021.

On January 12, 2021, the subcommittee met to discuss the distribution of the COVID vaccine and how it is being accessed by or made available to members. The administration of the vaccine varies widely by location, sometimes even from neighboring county to county. Some universities have been able to advocate successfully to have their student clinicians receive the vaccine, whereas others have not been able to receive the vaccine due to a shortage of doses in their area. Our 2020 ASHA President, Theresa Rodgers, wrote a letter to each state governor advocating for timely distribution of the vaccine to audiologists and speech-language pathologists. Consensus was given that advocacy must continue to promote a timely increased rollout and distribution in the coming weeks.

President-Elect Judy Rich provided an update on the first meeting of the year of the Committee of Ambassadors and indicated that a virtual Capitol Hill day is planned for March 2021.

**InTouch Forms**
InTouch Forms received from members since the last BOD meeting were shared with the BOD prior to the BOD meeting, and Chief Staff Officer for Communications Lisa Cole provided a summary of the messages.

**NSSLHA Update**
National Advisor for the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) Kia N. Johnson provided updates on NSSLHA governance, activities, and upcoming programs for students.

- In fall 2020, NSSLHA engaged with more than 2,000 students through virtual events including the National NSSLHA Office Hours, Speed Networking, Raw Conversations, and Instagram Sweepstakes. Additional information about upcoming virtual events can be found at [https://www.nsslha.org/programs/virtual-events/](https://www.nsslha.org/programs/virtual-events/).
- The National NSSLHA Executive Council approved the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Action (IDEA) Workgroup to provide support to National NSSLHA’s 2020–2022 Strategic Plan (Goals 1 and 3) by increasing opportunities to better engage and retain multicultural (minority) students, providing support to students of all intersectionalities, and increasing opportunities to educate members on cultural competency/humility.
- The NSSLHA Member Honors application period is now open through March 31. The awards are between $250 and $500. Additional information about Member Honors is available at [https://www.nsslha.org/programs/member-honors/](https://www.nsslha.org/programs/member-honors/).
- Student leadership applications are open February 1 through April 30. This includes positions on the NSSLHA Executive Council and 104 Student State Officer positions. Additional information is available at [https://www.nsslha.org/student-leadership/](https://www.nsslha.org/student-leadership/).

The Board of Directors meeting was adjourned on January 23 at 3:20 p.m. ET.