HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Personnel at health professions academic institutions acknowledge the importance of health and well-being for their students, faculty, preceptors, and the health care workforce. What is not clear is how closely accreditors from different health professions align their standards for addressing this critical concern with each other.

A new NAM Perspectives discussion paper from the National Academy of Medicine surveys the current field of health profession accreditors and their efforts to promote health and well-being for all health care professionals, as well as identify potential gaps and opportunities for collaboration. The purpose of this paper is to inspire a national dialogue about the well-being and resilience of the individuals to whom Americans turn for care and how well their professions’ accreditation standards address those concerns.

Unlike many other health professions schools that rely upon accreditation from a single organization, ASAHP member institutions must function in the accreditation sphere with several accrediting organizations because of the wide range of different professions represented in the degree programs offered. Time, effort, and expense are associated with satisfying the requirements of these various organizations that may differ in the demands placed on the academic institutions that they serve.

Although the focus of the paper is on medicine, nursing, and psychology from the perspective of how health and well-being fit within each profession’s learning continuum from education to practice, the paper ends with concluding recommendations that describe potential areas of alignment and opportunities for different health professions to work in concert with different accrediting bodies to build a culture of health and well-being for all.


GERIATRIC WORKFORCE FUNDING

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) plans to make available funding to improve health outcomes for older adults by developing a healthcare workforce that maximizes patient and family engagement, and by integrating geriatrics and primary care. The Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program is expected to make 47 awards totaling $35,730,000.

The estimated award amount may be as much as $750,000 per year, which includes at least $100,000 for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRD) education and training, subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Special emphasis is on providing the primary care workforce with the knowledge and skills to care for older adults and partnering with community-based organizations (CBOs) to address gaps in healthcare for older adults, promote age-friendly health systems and dementia friendly communities, and address the social determinants of health. Funding may be used to support the education and training of health professions students, residents, fellows, and faculty; healthcare providers; and direct care workers who will provide healthcare to older adults.

Funding also may be used to provide educational programs for individuals, patients, families, and caregivers to provide them with the knowledge and skills for self-management and/or care delivery for older adults.

Eligible applicants are accredited health professions schools and programs, including Physician Assistant Programs and Schools of Allied Health. Accredited graduate programs in Health Administration also are eligible. The closing date for applications is February 6, 2019.

HRSA will conduct a technical assistance (TA) webinar for applicants seeking funding through this opportunity. More information can be obtained at https://bhw.hrsa.gov/fundingopportunities/.
INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE SURVEY

Efforts are underway to launch ASAHP’s Institutional Profile Survey at the beginning of 2019. A centerpiece has been the collection of data on salaries of faculty and staff. The new version also will include a focus on interprofessional activities, clinical instruction, and trends in student enrollment by profession.

A key element will be the assignment of an individual at each school to oversee coordination of the data collection process. Deans and directors are encouraged to consider in advance whom to select to carry out this highly essential coordinating role.

COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS

How do higher education institutions build a freshman class? The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) offers answers to that question in its annual State of College Admission Report, providing students, parents, and other interested parties with a look at the various factors weighed when reviewing applications.


LOW INCOME STUDENTS

A report from New America on How the Privatization of Public Higher Education is Hurting Low-Income Students examines U.S. Department of Education data showing the average net price for students from families that annually make $30,000 or less at 584 four-year public colleges and universities in the 2015–16 academic year. More than half of these state-supported institutions (52%) expect the neediest freshmen to pay over $10,000, an amount that equals more than a third of their families’ yearly earnings. About 8% expect these students and their families to pay more than $15,000. The report can be obtained at http://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/media/UNDERMININGPELL_VOLUME_IV_2018-10-29_134242.pdf.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION DIVIDE

Higher education, along with health care, represent just two of many ideological battlegrounds that divide the electorate. According to a report issued by CQ Research on October 26 of this year, as tuition and student debt have risen over the past decade, a partisan divide about higher education has widened. Many liberals favor increased access to college while their conservative counterparts want universities to focus more on job training and demonstrate more openness to conservative ideas on campus.

Reductions in state higher-education funding have led public colleges and universities to raise tuition and fees sharply, which in turn has helped accelerate student debt to more than $1.5 trillion and place college beyond reach for many students. As costs have risen, liberals charge that government is not doing enough to help youth attain a degree. Conservatives argue that colleges should do more to provide students with practical job skills. Against that backdrop, bitter disagreements often involve free-speech rights on campus and disputes over college admission standards.

Some controversies hinge on ballot box issues, with liberal politicians calling for “free” taxpayer-funded tuition and conservatives demanding that schools focus more on skills-based training. The November 6, 2018 election was influenced in some places by voters indicating the kinds of action they believe must be taken to improve higher education.

The influence of politics serves as a backdrop in various disputes over establishing priorities. Conservatives complain students are being indoctrinated with liberal bias, while liberals worry most about rising tuition costs that leave graduates deep in debt. Higher education faces additional challenges, such as declining international student enrollment, Trump administration efforts to loosen regulations on for-profit schools that offer career training, and renewed debates over affirmative action in university admissions.

A partisan divide on higher education is reflected in public opinion surveys. A July 2018 Pew Research Center poll found that 73% of Republicans believe higher education is going in the wrong direction, compared with 52% of Democrats. A Gallup poll released in October 2018 found that only 39% percent of Republicans expressed confidence in higher education, down 17 points since 2015 and far lower than the 62% among Democrats.