

# 2002: Positioning HIM for Future Challenges

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by Barbara Odom-Wesley, PhD, RHIA

Each Association year builds on past achievements. In 2001, the AHIMA and FORE Boards of Directors, in consultation with many volunteer groups, adopted new mission, vision, and values statements. The mission and value statements serve as a touchstone keeping us focused on what we are charged with doing and how we go about doing it. The vision statements are our dreams of what long-term success looks like.

While space constraints prevent us from reproducing them here, you can find them on page 12 of the December *AHIMA Advantage* or at AHIMA's Web site at [www.ahima.org/about/](http://www.ahima.org/about/). I urge you to read these statements carefully and think about what they mean to you and how you can contribute to the success of AHIMA.

When you belong to a profession and a professional association, you take on the responsibility of doing your part to carry out the mission. You are bound by the values, and you should be able to describe the vision. Further, what you do every day in your work, and how you help HIM colleagues has everything to do with the ability of the Association to realize its vision.

## Getting Our Priorities in Order

To support our mission, the Board, staff, and volunteer groups coordinate efforts to take progressive steps each year. I want to share AHIMA's plan for making our goals a reality.

Each year, the Board holds a retreat to digest and organize all the input from the membership to gain a sense of direction. Through Team Talks, issue forums, the volunteer groups, and informal communication channels, strategic priorities for 2002 have been identified. These are:

**Strategic Issue 1: Work Force.** There is a lack of credentialed HIM professionals to meet market demands. Key positions go unfilled and professionals with other backgrounds are filling HIM jobs because there aren't enough of us to meet the demand. Strategies generated to address this phenomenon include increasing student enrollment in academic programs and offering specialty credentials. Additionally, we plan to target non-traditional prospective students this year. We also plan to commission research about HIM work force issues now and into the future.

**Strategic Issue 2: Membership.** AHIMA's membership growth has been consistent at 3 percent. However, without change, the growth rate will decline in the future, due to the aging of the membership and a decrease in new professionals. In response, the Association will focus on retention of current members as well as opportunities to attract new members.

**Strategic Issue 3: Coding.** There is increased competition in the coding marketplace that could erode AHIMA's leadership position. The 2001 House of Delegates adopted a plan to establish an entry-level coding credential. This, in turn, creates a coding career ladder and reinforces the CCS and CCS-P

as the industry's only mastery-level credentials. Further, new coding products are available and 2002 promises significant growth in online training opportunities for coders.

**Strategic Issue 4: Formal Education.** Declining enrollment in HIM programs and other academic issues continue to challenge the profession. A new volunteer group, the HIM Educational Strategy Committee, has been established to advance strategies that will help us sustain a strong academic network for HIM education.

All of these initiatives require significant resources to implement and complete. It takes the expertise of the staff and volunteers and the dedication of the entire membership. Every member is encouraged to provide input on any of these plans. With all of us working together, I know we'll be able to look back on 2002 as a successful year.

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