

# Charting Our Progress

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*by Margaret Skurka, MS, RHIA, CCS*

The first year of the new century is almost half over. I'd like to share our progress so far on a number of fronts, known as our current "hot topics."

At the close of our meetings, AHIMA board members participate in a hot topic debriefing. We discuss everything that affects the Association and profession. Help us address your interests by responding to what you read below and e-mailing me with additional concerns. I've heard from many of you already and the energy is infectious.

**Team Talks**—Winter Team Talks went well and covered the image marketing campaign, organizational structure/design, expeditions, long-range financial planning, and a general update. I hope you were there or have connected with a member who attended. We had record attendance and look forward to the same at our leadership conference in Washington, DC, next month.

**Communities of Practice**—Much of the discussion at Team Talks centered around the communities of practice, which will focus on common HIM interests, issues, roles, and practice areas. Their purpose will be to provide a conduit for Association members to access products, data, suppliers, and most importantly, other members, within a specific area of interest. Each state, section, society, and assembly will decide what works best for its particular structure. We hope to have several communities operational by the end of the year. Software to support this online venture is currently under review. The bottom line is that this will continue to make AHIMA absolutely indispensable to our members. Business continues to move faster and faster and we need to have similar speed in our organization. We believe that communities of practice will help get us there.

**Recruitment**—We need your help here. The number of baccalaureate programs is declining, and many HIT programs can accommodate additional students. While jobs abound in our field, we need more students enrolling in accredited programs. You can help make a prospective student aware of our profession. A new video targeted toward the younger student is being mailed to each state. Use our new brochures to educate prospective students about the field. If everyone reading this message recruited one student to the field, we could fill all our programs in the fall.

**Diversity Task Force**—The task force has begun its work on many fronts, including data analysis, scholarship information and programs, networking, mentoring, and leadership development. Look for more information from this group as the year progresses.

**AHIMA Update**—For many years, AHIMA board members have traveled to states to present updated national information. This year, we are speaking in almost every state. That's a lot of travel, a big commitment of volunteer time, and the state bears the cost of bringing the board member in. We'd like your input on this process and whether it should continue.

**Education**—A recent white paper presented to us by the Joint Committee on Education takes a comprehensive approach to analysis of HIM academic education and the viability of our current network of associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree programs. The findings will be published shortly. Review them carefully, and consider how you can help.

**New Practitioner Panel**—During my incoming president's address at last year's convention, I announced my plans to appoint a New Practitioner Panel to meet in Chicago during the year. The group has met, and I'll share information about their thoughts in a future column. Those of us with many years of experience love to hear the perspectives of HIM professionals new to the field. We kept the panel to Chicago-area new practitioners to keep costs down. We have a wonderful group who will continue to provide us with vision and guidance.

**Voting**—It's time to vote for future AHIMA leaders. Pull out that ballot in this issue and do it today. It is very important.

Enjoy the beginning of the summer and take some time for yourself amid all you do in your personal and professional lives.

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