

It Takes Leadership to Reimagine HIM

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By Valerie Watzlaf, PhD, MPH, RHIA, FAHIMA

As leaders in the HIM profession, we must strive to reimagine our future and embrace the change that will accompany it. Looking back over the HIM Reimagined (HIMR) recommendations, I see areas where we have already made progress—and others that we still have some work to do.

1. Increase the number of AHIMA members who hold relevant graduate degrees (e.g., HIM, Health Informatics, MBA, MD, MEd, MPH) to 20 percent of total membership within 10 years. Currently, about 14 percent of our members hold a master's degree or higher. Mentorship is important to reach this milestone. A mentor can provide advice, support, and knowledge through the entire educational process. Employer support is also vital—whether with afforded time off to attend classes or through financial support such as tuition assistance. To complete my master's and doctorate I received both strong mentorship and financial support through my employer.

2. In collaboration with other health and health-related organizations, in the public and private sectors, build a mechanism to ensure availability of research that supports health informatics and information management. Some of our members conduct evidence-based best practices, policies, and interventions that can be applied to healthcare and population health. But much work remains to be done in this area. The AHIMA Foundation Research Network is conducting research in areas that are vital to HIM.

3. Increase the opportunities for specialization across all levels of the HIM academic spectrum through curricula revision, while retaining a broad foundation in health information management and analytics. The 2018 HIM competencies have been finalized by the Council for Excellence in Education and provided to the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education to use. Several educational programs have or are moving toward building specialty concentrations to accommodate the needs of students and to provide them with more opportunity to enhance their skills and expertise directly in the HIM workplace.

4. RHIA credential is recognized as the standard for the HIM generalist practice and the RHIT (+specialty) as the technical level of practice. Even though the RHIT+ certification will not move forward currently, new and emerging ways to designate skills and knowledge for not only the RHIT, but also for all AHIMA certifications, will be explored. The RHIT to RHIA proviso allows current RHIT credential holders who also hold a baccalaureate degree or higher in any field to sit for the RHIA exam. Currently, 336 members have taken advantage of this opportunity and 85 percent have passed the RHIA exam through the proviso.

HIMR is our vision for the future in education, research, specialization, and credentials. As Ron Heifetz, the founding director of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University, states in *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*: “Leadership is a difficult practice personally because it almost always requires you to make a challenging adaptation yourself. Those are hard choices because they involve both protecting what is most important to you and bidding adieu to something you previously held dear: a relationship, a value, an idea, an image of yourself.” As effective and adaptive leaders, let's continue to reimagine our future and the bright promise it holds for all of us.

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