

# The Future is Now: Engaging the Next Generation of HIM Professionals

Save to myBoK

By Lisa Chernikoff

Students and new professionals in health information management (HIM) have a bright future ahead of them in a growing industry. Now more than ever, there are unprecedented opportunities to excel in HIM and beyond. AHIMA's student membership is on the rise as a result of these exciting prospects.

Since 2000, AHIMA's student membership has grown from 5,000 to more than 17,000 students. This is significant because today's student members are the future leaders of both the profession and the association. To represent the student viewpoint and better engage this important section of membership, AHIMA created the Student Advisory Council (SAC).

## Tuning in to Students

The SAC represents AHIMA's diverse student population: full-time workers, part-time workers, traditional and non-traditional ages, career changers, and online- and classroom-based students. SAC members help shape current and future programs for students and initiate new activities relevant to student members. To accomplish this work they draw on their own experiences, providing feedback about what students need to succeed and how AHIMA should connect with them now and moving forward.

In its first term last year, the SAC created several new offerings to meet the needs of student members. One new program that has been a great success is the revamped AHIMA Mentor Program. Introduced in April, this exclusive member benefit harnesses the power of AHIMA's community of HIM professionals. The program's goal is to better communicate the knowledge and passion of current HIM professionals to the next generation. It pairs interested members-students, new grads, or others-with experienced mentors who can answer their questions, provide insight, and offer guidance about starting or advancing a career in HIM.

## Encouraging Clubs

The SAC also launched a new HIM club toolkit (available at <http://hicareers.com/Toolbox/himclub.aspx>) to promote the development of local HIM student clubs at campuses across the country. The SAC encourages club development with the goal of further engaging students. HIM clubs add to the educational experience not only by generating enthusiasm about the industry, but also by providing a forum for students to gather, share ideas, and connect to the profession outside of their coursework.

The toolkit received a powerful response from students and faculty at schools where HIM clubs already exist, as well as from students looking to start clubs at their school or online. The SAC also plans to further collaborate with local HIM clubs in the upcoming year.

Another new program geared towards student members is a free career prep webinar series. The webinars aim to prepare students and new grads to land their first jobs and start successful careers. The first webinar, held in May, discussed best practices for resume writing. Webinars in June and July focused on preparing for job interviews and career advancement. The webinars have been archived on the AHIMA and Student Communities of Practice (CoP) at <http://cop.ahima.org> for those who could not attend. More career prep webinars are planned for fall.

## HIM Club Toolkit

The HIM club toolkit (available at <http://hicareers.com/Toolbox/himclub.aspx>) is a comprehensive document developed to promote and support the development of local HIM student clubs at campuses across the country. The toolkit includes tips for getting started, sample club government documentation, suggested informational meeting agenda, and possible events. Ways for student HIM clubs to engage their campuses could include:

- Career fairs: Hosting a career fair is an effective way for student clubs to develop their presence not just on campus but in their local professional community. Preparing to host and participate in the fair could also help students gear up for their own job searches.
- Information sessions: Hosting informational and discussion sessions on campus allows HIM students to gain experience communicating the message of HIM's importance to a wide audience. The session could involve club members, students, faculty, staff, and even local professionals.

Questions regarding the AHIMA Mentor Program, HIM club toolkit, or career prep webinar series can be directed to Lisa Chernikoff at [lisa.chernikoff@ahima.org](mailto:lisa.chernikoff@ahima.org).

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