



2009 Student Report
ACNM Annual Meeting
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Introduction

We would like to begin by thanking you, the board of the ACNM, our preceptors, professors, and future colleagues, for giving us the opportunity to share the Student Report today. We have come from programs across the country, full of energy and excitement about midwifery. Thank you for embracing us with such enthusiasm. We would especially like to thank the ACNM board for appointing our fellow student, Lindsey Wilson from Baylor University, to the board, so that we might have a stronger voice.

We are grateful for this opportunity, as a student body, to share our ideas. There are several topics in which we as students take particular interest. We would like to specifically address the issues of the student voting rights within the ACNM, funding of midwifery education, the need for additional preceptors, the annual meeting, the College website, marketing, and diversity within the profession.

Student Vote

Being a midwifery student requires both passion and professionalism. We bring to the table a vast variety of life experiences and a dedication to the study of midwifery. Our role as students gives us a unique perspective on the issues facing the College, and it is our opinion that we could better serve the College if students were granted the right to vote in the ACNM.

The decisions voted on in the ACNM today will impact us as student midwives and future midwives tomorrow. It is our belief that if we pay the required dues to become members of the ACNM, and are aware of the issues facing the profession, then this should entitle us to the right to vote. As students, we have access to the most recent evidence based data and research through our educational institutions. We study the practice guidelines and current political issues, and benefit from the combined knowledge which you, our professors and preceptors, share with us. You have given so much to us; please allow us to serve the College and the profession by letting our voice count in the ACNM.

Funding of Midwifery Education

As we begin our transition from student midwives to practicing midwives, one of the greatest challenges facing us is educational debt. In light of the current economic situation, this issue looms larger than ever. Midwifery students need to be made aware, from the time of program entry or even before, of the financial resources available to assist them in overcoming their educational debt. By increasing awareness of loan repayment and scholarship options to both perspective and current midwifery students, the doors will be open to allow a larger and more diverse population to pursue midwifery education.

In addition to providing students with information about existing scholarships and loan repayment programs, the ACNM can also be instrumental in the development of new programs to assist students and graduates in their transition to practice. By lobbying at both the state and



federal levels, the ACNM may assist the women of America in receiving the care they need by educating legislators about the need for stronger support and funding of midwifery education.

The encouragement of the development of small scale scholarships, which may cover the cost of books and other expenses, will remove more of the financial barriers facing midwifery students. It is our hope that these financial considerations will allow men and women who wish to improve maternal child health in their own communities and around the world to pursue their midwifery education regardless of their own financial standing or background.

Increasing Preceptorship Opportunities

While funding is essential to meet the ACNM's stated goal of graduating 1000 students annually by 2015, we as students are also acutely aware of the need to overcome the significant limitations in the availability of clinical sites and preceptors. We cannot adequately express our appreciation to those of you who have chosen to precept students.

We as students would like to challenge the ACNM to establish another goal: to have 50% of active members working as preceptors by 2015. We will have 1,000 students graduating annually by then: we need all of you. Creative solutions are needed to both attract and support new preceptors. Recruitment may be facilitated by rewarding clinical sites for precepting students. We also believe that our preceptors deserve to be honored at both a regional and a national level. The development of precepting awards would serve to recognize the efforts of preceptors and inspire more midwives to become preceptors themselves.

The hundreds of new graduates who enter the workforce each year remain a largely untapped and yet vital source of new preceptors. We would like to see active recruitment of new graduates to precept within three years of beginning practice. Support for preceptors is essential to recruitment and retention. The development of free web-based precepting courses, covering basic and advanced content, would provide easily accessible and cost effective support for preceptors. In addition, the establishment of an online bulletin board on the ACNM website could foster solution-sharing among preceptors and mentors.

Homebirth and international precepting sites are also at the heart of our midwifery education, allowing us to benefit from the collective and diverse wisdom of our community-based midwives. While US homebirth malpractice coverage issues are being resolved, interim solutions to ensure all students gain this valuable experience can include post-CNM internships and the promotion of observational experiences for students both in the home and international settings. The ACNM's Department of Global Outreach and the Division of Education could work together to develop exchanges and other educational opportunities with international midwifery schools. We feel that student clinical experiences both in the home and internationally will enrich our overall midwifery education and better prepare us for our future careers as midwives.

Annual Meeting

Coming to the annual meeting is an exciting opportunity for students to network, further their involvement in the College, and capitalize on educational opportunities. Therefore, decreasing barriers for student participation is essential to increasing meeting attendance. The most significant barrier is cost, and there are multiple ways to make the meeting more affordable for students. Offering a combined ACNM membership and annual meeting fee at a more deeply discounted price would encourage more student members to attend the annual meeting. To reduce costs related to housing, sponsoring city members could be encouraged to open their homes to students. As some members have already graciously done, when an extra bed is available in a hotel room, it could be gifted to a student.

We appreciated the opportunity to gain free registration to the annual meeting through the video contest; further opportunities such as this would be highly valued. Another way to employ student creativity would be the development of a contest to design an annual meeting t-shirt. Proceeds from the sale of these t-shirts could be directed toward student scholarships to attend the annual meeting. Once such a fund is developed, additional donations could be solicited at the annual meeting.

A second barrier for student attendance is the length of stay required to participate in all student activities. We believe that student activities should be concentrated over a 2-3 day period. This would decrease the cost for accommodations and extended travel time. The opportunity to attend the annual meeting is something we believe every student midwife deserves, and we hope that these changes will greatly increase student attendance and participation.

Website Enhancement

Our organization has a wealth of information to share within the community of midwives and with the public at large. The ACNM website is an excellent resource for student and practicing midwives, as well as consumers. As students who learn in a technological environment, we recognize the advantages of fully utilizing this resource. We applaud the ACNM staff and volunteers for their hard work in the development and maintenance of these resources, and we are excited about more potential advancement in this area.

We recommend enhancements to the website to improve information accessibility for all. We feel the following additions to the website would be beneficial to both current and potential students: a more in depth side by side comparison of midwifery educational programs; an official preceptor directory page with indicators to show availability; and moderated forums on topics of interest to midwives, students, and consumers.

The website could also be a valuable resource for students preparing for their certification exams. We deeply appreciate the exam preparatory course offered at the annual meeting. Adding



an online preparatory course with sample questions and test taking strategies would provide students with the opportunity to access this resource throughout the year. This online course could be utilized by more students while also creating a valuable revenue source for the College.

Marketing

We truly believe that every woman deserves a midwife, and therefore we must ensure that every woman in American knows about the unique care that midwives provide. We applaud current public awareness efforts such as Seattle's "I chose a midwife because..." campaign. As students, we want to use our enthusiasm to create slogans, buttons, bumper stickers, and more to spread the word throughout the country. Please, put us to work.

Along with increasing public awareness of midwifery to consumers, we must also promote midwifery as a career choice. In order to accomplish this, midwifery should be promoted as a profession in elementary schools, high schools, colleges, and beyond. Students have both enthusiasm and the time to go into these institutions and promote our profession. We invite you to join us as we actively pursue these opportunities throughout this next year. As students, we could not be more excited about the career we have chosen. We hope to work together with you, utilizing creative and informative marketing strategies, to promote the profession and provide all women with excellent midwifery care.

Diversity

As midwives, it is our privilege to serve a diverse population of women. That diversity must be reflected within our own profession. Deliberate recruitment of men and women who represent the diversity found across this country should be a priority for midwifery. Diversity in our profession would benefit not only the families we serve, but also would greatly enrich our profession as a whole. We need midwives of all races, classes, genders, sexual orientations, cultures, religions, and ages.

We strongly encourage the ACNM to develop pathways and programs to increase our profession's diversity through scholarships, the College website, educational materials, and targeted recruitment from underrepresented communities. As students, we learn from the stories and experiences of our classmates, preceptors, and professors. Our learning experience is broadened and enriched as our own diversity grows.

Conclusion

Again, we would like to thank the board of directors of the ACNM for allowing us the privilege of sharing our ideas with the College. We hope that these ideas spark changes that will not only benefit present and future students, but will enrich the organization and profession as a whole.