



Student Representative Report
55th Annual ACNM Convention, Closing Business Meeting, June 14, 2010
Presented by Lisa M. Richards, RN, SNM, Vanderbilt University
and Claire H. Rodriguez, RN, SNM, Georgetown University

At this, the 55th Annual Meeting of the ACNM, we would like to thank and acknowledge the President and Board of Directors for bringing us here together in Washington, DC. We would also like to thank our professors, preceptors, all of the midwives here this week, and the pioneers who have come before us for their dedication to midwifery. We appreciate that the Board has been and continues to be receptive to the voice of students. Over the past year, the College has worked to implement changes that were important to us, the new generation of practicing midwives. These include: the creation of the work-study program, which was newly implemented this year and allowed 50 students free registration to the meeting; the development of a student-specific listserv; and the grouping of student activities at the conference, which eased student access and attendance to events. In addition, the Board has given students increased representation via the creation of a new student board member position, and the Board has also enabled students to participate in motion discussions during business meetings. For all of these changes, we thank you.

This year the student representatives discussed a number of topics of importance to us, and identified three priority areas of interest to bring forward before the College. These topics are the marketing and public awareness of midwifery, preceptors and clinical sites, and student communication and networking.

Marketing of Midwifery

The first area of interest we would like to discuss is the marketing of midwifery. Many of us have found a widespread lack of awareness about midwifery among members of the lay and medical communities alike. As rising members of the midwifery community, we are dismayed by the knowledge gaps and extensive misconceptions we encounter, and what they might mean for the future of our profession. Our group has therefore developed several suggestions to further enhance and complement the efforts already undertaken by the ACNM to address these issues. The first is to encourage CNMs and CMs to increase involvement in other educational venues. We recommend that the ACNM develop tools to help individual members to establish, seek out and take advantage of opportunities to be guest speakers or become otherwise involved in high school sex education, university courses, medical schools, nursing schools, and other related areas. In such settings, midwives could describe their role, thereby introducing the public and other medical professionals to our presence and philosophy while also providing educational content. A second suggestion is to increase efforts to distribute existing publications about CNMs and CMs throughout the community. This could be accomplished by distributing ACNM-endorsed pamphlets that define midwives in the waiting rooms of hospitals in which we practice or the exam rooms of health care professionals with whom we collaborate and consult. An additional suggestion to address the public knowledge gap would be for the ACNM to identify and form relationships with respected public figures who support midwifery and whose voices could help to publicize our profession. Our final recommendation would be to find low-cost advertising venues, for example facebook.com, that reach large numbers of the population and could lead individuals to sources about who we are, what we do, and how to access us. Efforts by the ACNM to explore such avenues may increase awareness about midwifery, thereby increasing the public demand for midwifery services - directly and through referrals from our colleagues in other professions - and also aid in recruitment of students into midwifery education programs. These steps would not only help to secure our future, but ultimately augment our ability do what we do best: care for women.

Preceptors & Clinical Sites

The second issue of concern to our group is the importance of access to high-quality clinical experiences and preceptors. As midwifery students we depend on comprehensive educational experiences to become competent practitioners; therefore, we are interested in increasing access to clinical sites and preceptors. Before offering our recommendations, we would like to acknowledge the continued efforts of the current and future elect Board to improve the number and quality of preceptors across all midwifery programs. Specifically, we would like to commend the members of the ACNM who have supported the Teaching Billing Legislation. Thank you. The first of our recommendations is to propose the creation of a database of available ACNM preceptors to improve communication between these practitioners and our schools. Our second recommendation is that preceptors be rewarded for their mentorship. Reward possibilities may include: free CEUs through the ACNM's live learning center, a discount to either the annual meeting or membership dues, and access to the school's educational materials such as online journals. Finally, we also recommend that the College and accredited schools establish the expectation that graduate nurse-midwives become preceptors when eligible. New preceptors should be supported by peer mentorship and provided with an ACNM preceptor toolkit. If you currently precept or encourage your colleagues to precept we applaud you; your wisdom and experience is essential in shaping the future of midwifery.

Student Communication

The final area we would like to discuss today is the topic of student communication. As future midwives, we are actively engaged in the process of becoming part of the midwifery community. ACNM student members believe it is vital to strengthen lines of communication among student midwives with the goal of increasing involvement in the larger organization. We have four suggestions to achieve this goal. First, we ask that the ACNM provide a current list of student nurse midwives so that an e-list mechanism can be created, allowing for direct e-mailings to student members. Second, we ask that a new member packet be created specifically for students that includes information on how to easily access that which would be most pertinent to SNMs and SMs, such as student services within the organization, how to connect with other students, and ways to get involved with local ACNM chapters. Third, we ask that the ACNM add a tab for students to its home web page. This would provide a convenient location for the consolidation of information relevant to students. Examples of such information include: a link to join the student listserv, the email address for the current student board member, a list of the planned rotation of student board members, details on how to be a student page or work-study volunteer at the annual meetings, and information regarding student involvement with GAC & PAC. Creating a single website location for all information relevant to students would increase ease of access to this knowledge, and therefore ease of involvement and utilization of ACNM services. Fourth and finally, we suggest the offering of an additional discount registration for students. This could be implemented in multiple ways. For example, a discount could be offered to groups of students, such as five or more who register together. Alternatively, a non-member student price could be offered. This discount would enable students who might wish to attend, but are uncertain of their interest in or ability to afford membership, to come experience the benefits of conference attendance and ACNM membership. This could ultimately increase annual meeting attendance, ACNM membership, and the involvement of students in the College overall.

Conclusion

As students, we feel that these issues are important not only to us, but also to future students and the organization as a whole. We would like to thank our fellow students for their support and contributions to this report. We would also like to thank you, the Board, for the opportunity to present to the College today, and for the time and consideration you have given our recommendations. Your support and efforts on our behalf are greatly appreciated, and we look forward to continuing to be a part of this organization, through which we can advocate for and advance the profession of midwifery together.

Thank you