

Student Health Alliance Builds Momentum

In 2001, PHSC led a national student movement to convene the first National Leadership Conference for Students in Healthcare (NLC) at the annual APHA meeting in Philadelphia, PA. The first conference, kicked off by Dr. David Satcher, M.D. Ph.D., the former U.S. Surgeon General, was aimed at improving communication and collaboration among national student organizations representing various health professions. The meeting was a great success and resulted in the formation of the Student Health Alliance (SHA). Today, SHA is comprised of 12 national student organizations representing over 180,000 student members in physical therapy, allopathic and osteopathic medicine, medicine, nutrition, nursing, public health, healthcare management and social work.

Thanks to support from the Association of Academic Health Centers and grant funding from the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, PHSC in collaboration with the American Medical Student Association convened a planning retreat with the leaders of all SHA organizations at the Kaiser Family Foundation's National Headquarters in Washington, DC, on April 5-6 2003. During this meeting, SHA leaders began building infrastructure necessary to establish SHA as an effective, long-lasting coalition of student organizations dedicated to: 1) improving the understanding about each of our respective health professions and organizations; and 2) collaborating to protect and improve the health of our communities. More specifically, we developed draft mission and vision statements, bylaws, short and long-term goals and the organizational structure necessary to fulfill the mission. A list of draft criteria for selecting projects and initiatives for SHA participating organizations to collaborate to help achieve Healthy People 2010 objectives was also developed.

Since the retreat, SHA leaders have participated in monthly conference calls to discuss opportunities to work together and reconvene the Second NLC. In June, the National Student Nurses Association (NSNA), an SHA participating organization, convened a panel of SHA leaders at their annual meeting in Phoenix, AZ. In front of an audience of more than 3,500 meeting participants, panelists described aspects of their educational training and highlighted opportunities for collaboration among and between SHA participating organizations and NSNA members. Interestingly, in the question and answer session that followed, most of the questions were about, "what public health has to offer nurses and the nursing profession." By the end of the panel presentation, numerous NSNA members requested APHA's website address so that they could become members! This is just one example of how SHA has been effective in improving students and professionals' awareness about the expertise offered by various health professions.

Like boulder rolling down a mountain range, SHA's momentum keeps building! I am pleased to announce that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Public Health Practice Program Office awarded PHSC \$20,000 in conference support to help reconvene the NLC. This year, the meeting will be held on January 9-11, 2004 in Washington D.C. Although meeting attendance is limited to up to 10 board members from each of the SHA participating organizations, PHSC is looking for APHA student members interested in helping to plan and convene the meeting. As a member of PHSC's SHA taskforce, you

will be invited to attend and participate in the meeting on behalf of PHSC. This is a great opportunity to learn from and network with our nation's best and brightest student health leaders. In future years, funds permitting, PHSC and SHA hope to open the NLC to all members.

If interested in learning more about SHA, the NLC or joining PHSC's SHA Taskforce, visit www.phsc.org and click on the link for the Student Health Alliance. You can also email me directly with questions at president@phsc.org.

Representatives from each of the 12 organizations participating in SHA contributed to this discussion including (in alphabetical order):

- Am. College of Nurse Practitioners
- Am. Dietetic Association, Student Service
- Am. Medical Assoc, Medical Student Section
- Am. Medical Students Association
- Am. Physical Therapy Assoc, Student Assembly
- Am. Student Dental Association.
- Natl. Assoc. of Black Social Workers
- National Student Nurses Association
- Public Health Student Caucus
- Student Academy of Am Acad. of Phys. Assts
- Student Natl. Medical Assoc.
- Student Osteopathic Medical Assoc.