



A Monthly Newsletter from ADEA Executive Director Richard W. Valachovic, D.M.D., M.P.H.

*In this month's letter, Dr. Rick Valachovic, Executive Director of the American Dental Education Association, shares some memorable moments from the 86th ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition, held last month in Phoenix.*



### **Science, Policy, Millennial Mores, and More Served with High Spirits at 2009 ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition**

*The 2009 ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition included substantive discussions of new initiatives and opportunities, recognition of extraordinary dedication ... and a lot of fun.*

If you missed this year's ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition in Phoenix, well, you might have trouble believing what I'm about to tell you, but it's true. I counted more laughs than at any previous ADEA gathering. Now, I know we always have a good time when we get together, but this year was really extraordinary. Our Opening Plenary speaker, Frank Caliendo, made the requisite dental joke ("I'm worried you'll be looking at my teeth on the big screen"), and then regaled the audience with his astonishing impressions of George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jay Leno, and last but not least, his "Uncle Charlie." If that name doesn't ring a bell, think again. That's right, comedian and impressionist Caliendo is none other than the nephew of outgoing ADEA President Dr. Charles N. Bertolami, whom he referred to fondly as "probably my fourth or fifth favorite relative of my wife."

I think Charles may have felt a little competitive, because he had the audience doubled over several times in the course of his talk at Tuesday's symposium on getting students to care about treating underserved populations—not exactly the first topic one would think to mine for humor. Our ADEA Political Spotlight speaker, political strategist Torie Clarke, also kept the audience entertained with stories about her work as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs in the days leading up to the invasion of Iraq. (I know, not funny, but trust me—even the most ardent Democrats were amused.)

Of course, I don't want to give you the wrong impression. There was also a lot of substantive talk from ADEA leaders, as well as from Ms. Clarke. Most salient, perhaps, were her comments on health care reform, and her advice for dentistry was heartening. She encouraged us to take advantage of the fact that policymakers are talking about prevention. In her view, few groups can make as good a case for their role in prevention as dentistry can. She expressed skepticism about Congress's ability to achieve global reforms, but she thinks provisions for oral health care coverage could be one of the "three or four pieces that actually get done."

At Sunday night's Evening Plenary on Gender Issues: Discourse and Dessert, Dr. Isabel Garcia, Deputy Director of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research described women's experiences in leadership roles.

Tuesday morning's plenary was dedicated to bridging the generation gap with the so-called millennial generation. Richard Sweeney of the New Jersey Institute of Technology shared research findings on and conducted a live focus group with students. These participants, most of whom are students at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health, gamely revealed information about their tastes and work habits. All own iPods and are on Facebook; most own smart phones with Web access. They prefer learning by doing or interacting, in environments with instant feedback and little penalty for trial and error. They hope their future bosses will be both nice (understanding, appreciative, and communicative) and flexible. They also like to text message. (If you do not know that LOL means laughing out loud, you are decidedly not a millennial.)

A number of other sessions presented exciting models that tackle head on the challenge of how faculty can motivate and engage this generation. Two in particular seemed to capture the imagination of attendees: Monday's ADEA Presidential Symposium, Team Learning in Dental Education, offered concrete ways to capitalize on students' desire for contact with one another. If you are excited by the prospect

of prepared and inquisitive students coming to class without fail, you will want to check out [Dr. Frank Scannapieco's talk](#) about his work with students at the University at Buffalo.

Also, you will almost certainly also want to listen to [Dr. Anne Nofziger's exciting presentation](#), part of the ADEA Presidential Symposium on Peer Assessment and Developing Professional Competence. Dr. Nofziger directs the comprehensive assessment program at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry. Her institution has introduced peer assessment in its medical school, and they are finding it reliable for measuring student work habits and interpersonal attributes.

We will explore these topics further at the 2010 ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition in Washington, DC, where our theme will be "Assessment: Portraits of Change." I hope many of you are already at work preparing [program proposals](#), which are due June 1, 2009. Dr. Ron Hunt, our new ADEA President and Martha Bushong, the incoming Chair of the ADEA Annual Session Planning Committee, have already been very busy leading the preparations for a great program here in the nation's capital. Whether you are interested in anchoring a Lunch & Learn discussion, piquing the interest of your colleagues at a New Idea Session, sharing best practices in teaching through the ADEA SoTLfest, or organizing a symposium around the latest evidence-based research, I urge you to play an active role in next year's gathering. Comedy routines are always welcome, but of course proposals that are strictly business will also be given serious consideration.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. First, I want to share a few more highlights from this year's gathering.

Two related symposia drew audiences eager to learn about initiatives aimed at providing dental care to the underserved. [Presentations on the Alaskan Dental Health Aide Therapist \(DHAT\) program](#) brought to life some of the unique challenges that the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) faces in serving the Alaskan Native population. Images of small planes landing on sea ice next to snow-covered island villages stood in striking contrast to the warm Arizona sun enveloping the Phoenix Convention Center. Once a year, USPHS dental providers overcome harsh geographical challenges to spend ten 12-hour days treating the residents of remote villages. Even more daunting are the oral health challenges that confront them. Some villages do not have running water, smoking rates are high, and until recently dentures were commonplace for teenagers.

The DHAT program has started to change these patterns by positioning therapists in remote communities where they can provide preventive and restorative treatment with greater frequency. What's more, the DHATs appear to be leading a cultural shift as young people in the villages they serve seek to emulate their professional achievement and their healthy smiles.

In a separate presentation, my friend Admiral Chris Halliday, the USPHS Chief Dental Officer, offered a similar report on the state of oral health among Native Americans generally, and likewise expressed his optimism that a growing interest in serving this population, and the recent introduction of financial incentives to do so, would start to turn things around. It then fell to Charles to address the question of how schools can foster an interest in serving underserved populations among their students. He suggested that a service-learning model that would shift much of our clinical training to community settings might work well for our professions.

Of course the state of our economy was never far from the minds of attendees, and ADEA responded with a Town Hall Meeting that discussed the opportunities available to academic dental institutions through the federal economic stimulus package. Presenters advised attendees on steps they might take to ensure that a portion of the funding set aside for health information technology (HIT) is made available to academic dental institutions. (Read some details about criteria and deadlines in the April [Bulletin of Dental Education Online](#).)

A separate standing-room-only session sponsored by the ADEA Commission on Change and Innovation in Dental Education (ADEA CCI) offered a gloomy assessment of the current state of the economy. No surprise there, but ADEA Director of Legislative Policy Development Monette McKinnon offered some rays of hope. She laid out new opportunities for federal support of not only HIT, but comparative effectiveness research and health professions education as well.

I would be remiss without acknowledging a few more events and some of the people who made this year's ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition such a success. Many of you arrived as early as Thursday to take part in workshops and meetings on Friday, and Saturday also brought many ADEA Councils, committees, and other groups together to engage in the nuts-and-bolts work that keeps our Association moving forward.

Hundreds turned out Saturday night for dinner, dancing, and the second annual William J. Gies Awards for Vision, Innovation and Achievement. A series of other awards presented over the course of the next three days recognized the extraordinary talent and dedication that exists among ADEA members. One of these, Dr. Jim Swift, received the ADEA Distinguished Service Award. In an emotional acceptance speech, Jim reminisced about his history with ADEA starting in his student days and culminating in his service as President from 2007 to 2008. Rest assured,

Jim intends to remain an active member of our Association. In fact, he left the Annual Session early to fly to Washington to testify before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services on behalf of dental education. Thank you, Jim!

I want to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing president Dr. Charles Bertolami, the ADEA Annual Session Planning Committee, and its accomplished Chair, Dr. Dorothy Perry, for their exceptional work.

Thanks also to the ADEA Council of Faculties and the ADEA SoTL Community of Interest for organizing the second annual ADEA SoTLfest, and to the presenters, staff, volunteers, exhibitors, and sponsors whose insights, energy, and generosity made the 2009 ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition so successful.

For those of you who were unable to join us in Phoenix or to make every session that caught your eye, you'll find 2009 ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition programming on the Web at the ADEA Live Learning Center at [www.softconference.com/ADEA](http://www.softconference.com/ADEA).

To those of you who were in Phoenix, let me close by saying, great to see you. To those of you who weren't, I hope I've helped you imagine what being at the ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition can mean for you. I look forward to working with all of you throughout the coming year and to reconnecting in person at [next year's ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition in Washington, DC](#).



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