

In this month's letter, Dr. Rick Valachovic, Executive Director of the American Dental Education Association, previews the upcoming 2010 ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition and chats with ADEA President Ron Hunt about how assessments shape education on his campus.



Move Over, Multiple Choice. There Are New Assessments in Town.

In two short weeks, we will be in the thick of it. OSCEs, portfolios, the Triple Jump. Self, peer, and institutional assessment. Is it formative or summative? How reliable? How valid? As always at the ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition, the presentations will be engaging, the dialogues compelling, and the possibilities tantalizing. Change and innovation truly are taking hold at our institutions, and I know after you hear about what your colleagues have accomplished, many of you will head home determined to implement new approaches to assessment at your own institutions.

Assessment is one of the eight core principles articulated by the [ADEA Commission on Change and Innovation](#) (ADEA CCI). We have ADEA CCI and our current President, Ron Hunt, to thank for this opportunity to explore assessment in depth. As you may remember, when Ron ran for ADEA President-elect, he cited change and innovation as among his highest priorities. That's no surprise, given his experience as Dean of the [Virginia Commonwealth University \(VCU\) School of Dentistry](#). In this capacity, Ron has overseen a major curricular reform effort focused on integrating the basic and clinical sciences, early entry into clinical practice, incorporating the general practice model of patient care delivery within the school's clinics, and enhancing and expanding extramural rotations to community-based clinics. In the process, VCU has introduced self-assessment, peer assessment, journaling during rotations, and a comprehensive objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) into its curriculum. What is more, VCU is currently engaged in assessing the impact of the new curriculum on student learning and satisfaction. More on that later.

I recently spoke with Ron and Martha Bushong, the VCU's Director of Communications and Public Relations and Chair of this year's ADEA Annual Session Program Committee. They had positive things to say about each of the new assessments currently in use at VCU, but they were especially eager to talk about the self-assessments that students are now required to perform in the clinic.

"We're asking students to make the same sort of judgment that dentists need to make every hour of every day," Ron told me. "Students used to turn to us and say, tell me if this is good enough. Now we ask them to think it through and evaluate their own work before the faculty give their appraisals."

Implementing this new assessment has been challenging. Martha notes that the current generation of students has been raised with an "everybody-gets-a-trophy" mentality that can get in the way of honest self-criticism. Additionally, faculty were reluctant at first to introduce another time-consuming element into their clinic routines.

"Working with students on self-assessment requires a lot of patience," Ron acknowledges, "but the faculty have come to embrace it. Everyone appreciates how important it is in preparing students for practice."

Those of you who are able to join us here in Washington, DC, will hear many similar stories related to our 2010 ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition theme, Assessment: Portraits of Change. The call for programs produced a bumper crop of submissions related to assessing not just students but also faculty members and programs. Three Presidential Symposia will give us the big picture.

Many have been aware of new assessment techniques for some time, but their adoption is taking on momentum.

The first of these symposia, on Sunday, February 28, "Changing Institutional Culture Through Planning and Assessment," will look at the vital role planning and assessment play in promoting change. The presenters will highlight four case studies, each of which illustrates how assessment can dynamically improve effectiveness in the spheres of recruitment, e-learning, curriculum management, and community-based education.

Monday's Presidential Symposium will shine the spotlight on professors. "Using Faculty Assessments to Foster the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" will look at the role of assessment in helping faculty members document excellence in their teaching and learning activities. Presenters will discuss a range of strategies that can be used to evaluate educational scholarship including self-reflection, scholarly publications, portfolios, and the peer review process.

Finally, on Tuesday, March 2, "Answer, Hope, and Move On: What is Wrong With Student Assessment" will look at assessments from the student point of view. In the words of the presenters, "At their worst, assessments are seen by students as a barrier to advancement and used by faculty as a perfunctory rite of passage at the end of the course of instruction. ... At their best, assessments are multidimensional, formative, integrated to the learning environment, consistent with student expectations, and reflect programmatic and institutional values." This presentation will explore the reasons we have assessments and examine the positive influence of self-assessment on learning outcomes.

If you are also interested in learning about the protocol for assessing curricular change that ADEA CCI Liaisons Drs. Sharon Lanning and Ellen Byrne have developed at VCU, they will present a Lunch and Learn session on both Monday and Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. Their protocol uses three survey instruments to examine student perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the learning environment, the quality of student/teacher relationships, and the meaningfulness of clinical experiences. They began collecting data in 2008 with the introduction of VCU's competency-based curriculum to the entering class of 2011. They will continue to collect data in order to make comparisons between this cohort and the class of 2008, the last cohort to receive the old curriculum.

I hope I have whetted your appetite for the smorgasbord that awaits us when we convene here later this month. I'm eager to consume these presentations myself and to hear your reactions, listen to your plans, and gather your thoughts on how ADEA can continue to support change and innovation moving forward.

When I spoke with Ron Hunt, we talked about the hierarchy of assessments that some of our colleagues beautifully laid out in the ADEA CCI *Journal of Dental Education* white paper "[Student Dental Assessment Toolbox](#)." Ron noted, "It is heartening to look across dental education and see that more and more faculty and institutions are moving up that hierarchy. Many faculty have been aware of new assessment techniques for some time, but their adoption is taking on momentum, thanks to ADEA CCI."

I couldn't agree more. I feel confident that the 2010 ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition will stimulate additional movement in this direction. I hope to see you there, but if you are not able to join us, don't despair. ADEA CCI's new website already has lots of wonderful resources online, and I promise to share more on this topic when I report on what you missed at the 2010 ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition in April's *Charting Progress*.



Richard W. Valachovic, D.M.D., M.P.H.
Executive Director
valachovicr@adea.org

American Dental Education Association

1400 K Street, NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20005

For member service questions, call toll free 888-ADEA OPEN (888-233-2673)

Phone: 202-289-7201 Fax: 202-289-7204