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In recent years, ADEA has embarked on an ambitious journey. Long established as a voice for dental education, we have arrived at a place where we are now widely recognized as the voice of dental education. Our journey will continue, but let’s take a moment to admire the view from here.

In 2007 the ADEA Board of Directors identified four strategic goals, which provided an updated road map for this journey:

- Preparing institutions for the future
- Generating the workforce of the future
- Developing leaders for the future
- Delivering value to members

I’d like to share with you the highlights of ADEA’s most recent excursions—where we’ve traveled, what we’ve seen and heard this past year. We’ve paid special attention to the dashboard, tracking data to help us gauge how close we’ve come to reaching our destinations. This commitment to accountability and transparency has been embraced by the entire ADEA staff. It reflects our organizational vitality and marks a significant step forward in our quest to deliver value to you, our members.

To put a face on these metrics, we’ve taken some snapshots along the way. I think you’ll agree that the work of our ADEA leadership and our members is inspiring.
As you know, on January 2, 2006, ADEA shifted into high gear with the implementation of Open Membership. This generated remarkable interest and produced prolific growth that continued through 2007. Today, ADEA has a record number of institutional members and more than 16,000 individual members as well. The addition of Midwestern University College of Dental Medicine last year brought the number of U.S. dental schools to 57. We have also seen excellent growth in the number of allied and postdoctoral programs that now belong to ADEA.

ADEA also welcomes corporate members, and we have seen their ranks expand as well. While the number of corporate members has remained steady at 60 over the past two years, the consolidation of eight previous corporate members masks impressive growth in this membership category.

It goes without saying that we are extremely pleased with these developments, especially the meteoric rise in the number of student members. As we continue down the road we will focus our efforts on recruiting additional institutional members and on bringing value to all of our member institutions.

How can we gauge ADEA’s worth to its members? In this report we will strive to quantify that value for you, but some merits can only be appreciated through indirect measures. Much of ADEA’s value is reflected in an organizational culture that permeates everything we do.
At our 2007 Annual Session in New Orleans, ADEA President Dr. Jim Swift introduced the concept of “One ADEA,” a unified organization including all parts of the dental education community. In keeping with this notion, ADEA’s new strategic goals are designed to benefit all ADEA membership groups. They reflect an enduring ethos of mutual support within the ADEA family and a renewed commitment to act in concert to achieve shared objectives.

These ideas were already taking root in 2006 when the first ADEA Fall Meetings were held in Baltimore. This groundbreaking event brought together members from various segments of our organization to exchange perspectives on important issues for the first time outside the ADEA Annual Session. A repeat performance took place this past October in Nashville, Tennessee, where participants focused on the role of ethics in dental education. These gatherings allow educators, students, and administrators to speak directly to one another and form ties that should prove beneficial in turning discussion into action around mutual concerns.

The ADEA Sections and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) also exemplify the way in which our organization facilitates cooperation among its members. Not surprisingly, ADEA’s Sections and SIGs have flourished in the past two years and now bring together large numbers of people around common concerns.

I’m also pleased to report that our most important gathering, the ADEA Annual Session, is attracting an expanding portion of our membership. Program submissions for 2008 in Dallas jumped 32% over 2007, itself a banner year. Registration for last year’s meeting rose by 400, and 21% of those present were first-time attendees. Fifty-six percent had worked in dental education for fewer than five years. This high level of engagement among our younger and more recent members bodes well for our efforts to attract new blood to fill vacant faculty slots.

Over the last four years the Association’s consolidated net assets, a core measure of financial growth and stability, has more than doubled, reflecting the impressive financial performance of the organization overall.
A demanding course lies ahead, but ADEA is grooming a cadre of emerging leaders capable of handling whatever rough terrain we encounter. The ADEA Leadership Institute, a year-long program designed to develop the nation’s most promising individuals at academic dental institutions to become future leaders in dental and higher education, and the ADEA Allied Dental Faculty Leadership Development Program continue to attract a robust group of candidates. We received more than 30 applications, our largest pool to date, for the 2008-09 ADEA Leadership Institute. This seven-year-old program remains a major attraction on the roadmap drawn by our strategic goals. As we move into 2008, we will strive to extend the benefits of this program to an increasingly larger and more diverse group of applicants.

Our commitment to developing leadership also extends to efforts to prepare institutions to navigate a changing landscape. In 2004, ADEA established a pioneering forum on predoctoral dental curricula, the ADEA Commission on Change and Innovation in Dental Education (ADEA CCI). In 2007, ADEA CCI published nine white papers in the Journal of Dental Education (JDE), brought on board 150 Liaisons representing nearly every U.S. and Canadian dental school, and held its first major conference. These individuals will facilitate dialogue on their respective campuses around proposals to revise dental school curricula to better develop the competencies that will define dentistry in the 21st century. In 2008, ADEA CCI plans to move full steam ahead to publish another seven white papers, analyze recently collected survey data, and solidify the newly established connections between ADEA CCI and its Liaisons.

The ADEA Center for Educational Policy and Research is blazing a trail through similar territory. This past year, the Center made important strides in analyzing survey data relating to curriculum reform, the faculty shortage, and other educational policy issues. We successfully recruited a new director, Eugene L. Anderson, Ph.D., whose experience and expertise in the societal value of higher education, faculty engagement and student learning, and the concerns of minorities in higher education will benefit ADEA in its quest to serve its members. This and other changes in the Center’s staffing reflect an intensified focus on research and analysis as we work to prepare our member institutions to meet future challenges.
In 2000, the U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, released the first ever report on oral health. This landmark document revealed significant disparities in access to dental care among Americans and started ADEA down the road toward even more initiatives promoting greater equity and diversity in dental education. This direction was affirmed three years later by the Sullivan Commission’s work on diversity in the health care workforce. Together these reports serve as the basis for ADEA’s commitment of resources in this area.

Research has shown us that health professions students from underserved communities are most likely to return to practice in those same communities. To encourage this development, ADEA joined with the Association of American Medical Colleges in 2005 to offer a free summer academic enrichment program.
This latest project comes on the heels of a joint initiative funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the California Endowment entitled Access to Dental Careers. ADEA is proud to have served as the catalyst that brought these entities together for the first time to address dental education. Our common quest to encourage the entry of underrepresented minorities into dental education has borne fruit these past four years. Final reports submitted to the granting organizations in 2007 showed a total of 234 scholarships and loans awarded during the grant period. The results are striking: enrollment of students from targeted minorities increased an impressive 50% at the 15 participating schools.

To increase the diversity of dental faculty, with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation ADEA is creating academic partnerships that will enhance recruitment, retention, and advancement. Eleven dental schools are participating in this faculty development and leadership program.

This coming year ADEA will embark on a promising effort to increase the diversity of the dental workforce through a program called Moving Forward: Bridging the Gap. A generous grant awarded last fall by the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation will fund the development of a flexible seven-year dental curriculum modeled on one currently used in medicine. The curriculum will serve as an innovative tool with which to prepare underrepresented minority and low-income students for the practice of dentistry.

for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Nearly 1,000 students took part in the Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP) last year, and about a quarter of them plan to enter dentistry. Major funding for this initiative comes from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Dr. James Q. Swift testifies before Congress on Capitol Hill.

Dr. John R. Bailey instructs Howard University College of Dentistry students.
Our efforts in the area of equity and diversity take many forms, but ultimately they all support our strategic goal of generating the workforce of the future. In 2007, ADEA received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support ExploreHealthCareers.org, a free, interactive Web site that provides easy access to information about health careers. This site, originally launched with funds from the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, responds to a growing need. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the demand for health professionals is strong and will continue to rise. ExploreHealthCareers.org reflects this trend and ADEA’s commitment to encouraging diversity among entrants to the health professions.

We are also addressing workforce shortages in our own backyard, specifically the more than 400 dental faculty vacancies on campuses across the country. The ADEA Minority Dental Faculty Development Program (MDFD), funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, employs a “grow your own” philosophy to encourage minority dental students to prepare for academic careers. To date, awards have been made to six individual dental schools and to a consortium of schools in New York State. The grantees have created formal mentoring programs, academic partnerships, and community-based practice projects. In 2007, ADEA staff traveled to New York, Chicago, and Norman, Oklahoma, for site visits, and we’re pleased to report that we now have seven model programs to share with other institutions that want to nurture talented students for academic careers.
Over the past five years, we’ve seen a remarkable 64% increase in the number of applicants to predoctoral dental programs. We’ve also witnessed a steady rise in applications from underrepresented minorities. A similar boost in applications to postdoctoral education programs has been accompanied by parallel growth in the number of programs participating in ADEA’s Postdoctoral Application Support Service (PASS). Of the 715 accredited advanced dental education programs, 525 currently use PASS to process their applications. Over time we plan to augment the value of PASS and streamline the process for applicants by integrating a matching service.

ADEA places new emphasis on ensuring that dentistry remains an attractive career and continues to draw a robust and diverse applicant pool.

This past year also saw the creation of the Academic Dental Careers Fellowship Program (ADCFP) cosponsored by ADEA and the American Association for Dental Research (AADR). With initial funding from the ADA Foundation, this mentoring program gives participants an intensive year-long exposure to teaching and research. The 2007 fellows will report on their experiences at a special poster session at the 2008 ADEA Annual Session.

Of course, the first step in developing professionals for any sort of dental career involves getting students through the door of an appropriate allied, predoctoral, or postdoctoral program. That has been the purview of ADEA’s Division of Application Services, which acts as a gateway, processing applications from more than 14,000 prospective students to predoctoral and advanced education programs each year for our institutional members and additional institutions. At the end of 2007, Application Services became the ADEA Division of Educational Pathways, reflecting new emphasis on ensuring that dentistry remains an attractive career and continues to draw a robust and diverse applicant pool.

This newly named division will continue to provide the same essential services while refocusing its efforts in four areas: developing the best resource materials available on dental education, creating informative recruitment programming, using communications and collaboration to assure a robust pipeline of students, and enhancing application services with the goal of obtaining 100% participation from U.S. and Canadian dental education programs.

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This past year ADEA witnessed some exciting developments in communications as well. Last summer, Thomson Scientific announced that it would begin evaluating the *Journal of Dental Education* for its impact in the research community. This will significantly enhance the prestige and stature of this scholarly publication and affirm ADEA’s place as “the voice of dental education.” This recognition will also assist our authors who are pursuing promotion and tenure, and increase the journal’s value as a vehicle for professional development.

The *Bulletin of Dental Education Online* (BDE), our flagship member communication vehicle, continues to expand. Since going online in 2006, we have been able to increase the newsletter’s content by more than 50%. At present, thousands of members open the BDE each month to find useful information on current developments and opportunities in our field.
DEA also endeavors to provide timely information to our members around specific topics. We made great strides in this arena last year, building our information resources and making them easily accessible over the Web. We now have posted on our site more than 150 slides describing trends in dental education; two information toolkits; and two compilations of articles, papers, and data slides that reflect state-of-the-art thought on faculty quality-of-life issues and on underrepresented minorities in dental education.

Volunteer leadership is essential to our organization’s ability to accomplish its mission. We hope that by providing regularly updated information in a readily accessible format, we can support those members who take an active role in our community. A prime example of this is the ADEA Benchmarking Tool completed last year, which compares two years of applicant and enrollee information as well as 10 years of regionally aggregated faculty salary data. This will assist deans in making the case for offering competitive salaries to prospective hires.
A wealth of other information will be available to our members in the near future, thanks to the recently created ADEA Online Survey Center. This new, centralized database will report results more quickly and customize reports to meet member needs. By bringing together survey data that previously resided in separate departments, unforeseen trends will begin to emerge. Having a central database also has the added advantage of streamlining participation for those members who regularly supply data.

Member-to-member information sharing also came to an important crossroad in 2007. ADEA formed six new Communities of Interest (COI). These online, member initiated groups, which began in 2006, are actively facilitated and have attracted an enthusiastic following. The largest group, formed around the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), has 440 members. In addition to facilitating leadership development and promoting the sharing of best practices, these online communities also engage in real world encounters. The ADEA SoTL COI is planning its own programming in conjunction with the 2008 ADEA Annual Session.

Sadly, lack of access to oral health care remains a critical concern for too many Americans. More than 100 million of us, including almost 23 million children, have no dental insurance. In 2007, ADEA faced this challenge head on and made considerable strides in our efforts to influence public policy around access to care.

ADEA dedicated substantial energy to the reauthorization of the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Working in coalition, we crafted language for the bill and delivered the message to Congress that dental coverage is essential to children’s health. Although the bill was ultimately vetoed, the willingness of the Congress to include dental benefits in SCHIP represents a major step forward in ADEA’s quest to position access to oral health as a core health benefit for all Americans. ADEA and the entire dental community can be proud of our efforts in this regard. In the coming year, we will continue to work with our coalition partners to include this same guarantee when Congress considers the program next time around.

Last year U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (D-Maryland) asked ADEA to take the lead in crafting another proposal to improve access to dental care for children at risk. The proposal advocates the creation of “dental disproportionate share” or DDS payments, which would ease the financial burden on academic dental institutions and other safety net providers that treat underserved children. We will continue to work with Senator Cardin to see that this proposal is incorporated into the legislation he plans to introduce next year.
Of course, when it comes to effecting political change, ADEA cannot succeed without the backing of its members. This reality spurred ADEA to hit the road in 2006. Rather than focusing our advocacy efforts exclusively in Washington, we brought a series of ADEA-AADR Field Advocacy Workshops to campuses around the country. These gatherings are designed to educate, motivate, and activate our members to advocate at all levels of government. The success of the first workshops generated so much interest that seven more were held in 2007, and six are scheduled for 2008.

ADEA also reached out to members of the American Student Dental Association when they visited Washington last year, and worked with participants in our leadership development programs. I have no doubt that over time these initiatives will result in an expanded cadre of dental educators who are effective spokespersons for our profession.

The U.S. presidential election is generating excitement and creating opportunities for us to target issues that advance our mission and benefit our members. You will see us charting a course toward greater member engagement in the policy arena in 2008 so that we can fulfill our commitment to improving the health care of all Americans.

ADEA’s initiatives are underwritten by a generous group of philanthropies that have contributed more than $27 million in the past five years in direct and collaborative grants. Chief among these benefactors are the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the California Endowment, the American Dental Association Foundation, and the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation. The bulk of these donations, $25 million, directly supports our member institutions, with the remaining $2 million going to individuals. These grants allow us to deliver value to our members while addressing our other strategic goals: preparing institutions, developing leaders, and generating the workforce of the future.

In September, the ADEAGies Foundation announced the launch of the William J. Gies Awards for Vision, Innovation, and Achievement. For the inaugural awards ceremony on March 29, 2008, recipients selected from among academic dental institutions, dental educators, and public or private partners will be honored in each of the three designated areas. With the establishment of the Gies Awards, ADEAGies will bring recognition to outstanding individual and institutional leaders who have undertaken initiatives that support global oral health and oral health education.

In dental circles the name William Gies is synonymous with the highest achievement in dental education and research. In 1950, colleagues of Dr. Gies formed the first U.S. foundation to support dental education and scholarship. In 2002, this private entity joined with ADEA to form the ADEAGies Foundation, a public nonprofit that promotes oral health through programs that encourage excellence in dental education, research, and patient care.
I want to thank our President, Jim Swift, and the other members of the ADEA Board of Directors, including Charles Bertolami, Ken Kalkwarf, Sandra Andrieu, Joe Field, Diane Hoelscher, Ron Hunt, Sheila Koh, Ron Rupp, and Cheryl Westphal, for their remarkable time at the stewardship wheel of the Association during this year’s journey. I would also like to thank all of the volunteers who serve in leadership positions on our councils, committees, and commissions, and as our representatives to other associations and organizations.

Our roadmap has guided us well this past year. Now that we’ve taken a moment to reflect, it’s time to refuel and head out once again on the open road.

Many challenges lie before us in dental education. We live in an era of flux. Demographic changes mean a shrinking faculty, students with divergent needs, and a growing awareness that our profession must show leadership in serving the public. Advances in technology, financial pressures, and globalization will also shape the landscape surrounding our highway in the years ahead.

As we steer toward the future, we will keep one eye on the dashboard and measure the value of what we do. These critical metrics not only define our past, they are vital in charting our road forward.

Richard W. Valachovic, D.M.D., M.P.H.
ADEA Executive Director