

DRAFT STATEMENT
on revising the leadership structure
of the North Central Region

In seeking to determine how it can best respond to the needs and serve the goals of the North Central Region of ACPE, the NCR Board has engaged in a thorough review of both its functioning and other components of the regional structure and organization. To that end, the Board has met for two full day sessions of review and planning, one in March and one in July of this year. Such meetings have been prepared for and supplemented by monthly conference calls throughout this calendar year and conversations with chairs of the Standing Committees. The Board continues to understand a primary responsibility to be that of stewarding the Region's resources and holding itself accountable for that stewardship.

The Region has much for which to be grateful. The position of Regional Director continues to be filled capably by Gary Sartain. He responds quickly and effectively for requests for assistance and understands what is going on in the Region very well. His oversight of the region's finances is responsible and confident.

The Region is blessed with many strong centers and excellent supervisors providing quality education for students and the desired service for their institutions.

The Region is in a strong financial position, in spite of regular budget deficits, due to the careful use of the Region's funds including consistent under-spending on the part of most Standing Committees.

Less tangible, but no less real, strengths of the Region include the strong sense of collegiality that exists across the Region, the common commitment to providing the quality education noted above, the openness to using new technology when appropriate, a willingness to engage in collaboration and cooperation among centers, and an acceptance of diversity of many kinds.

On the other hand, it has been clear for some time that the Region faces a number of challenges that must be addressed if the strengths of the Region are not to be lost. From conversations with committee chairs and regional members in general and from discussions within the Board itself, a number of challenges have been identified.

At the macro level, health care institutions are under significant stress in the areas of personnel, financial viability, and the future of healthcare reform, all of which have their effect on CPE programs and supervisors. A manifestation of that stress is the pressure that most supervisors in the Region feel to “do more with less” leading to potential or actual cutbacks in administrative support, program funding, and personnel available to do the work of the Region.

Also at the macro level, a challenge is presented with the increase in diversity among students and patient population. With that diversity comes the loss of any consensus either within the culture or among the religious/spiritual community as to what constitutes appropriate or effective chaplaincy ministry. Understandings formerly taken for granted, even, for example, the use of the term “pastoral care”, become matters for scrutiny and debate. This challenge shows itself not only in the ministry provided but also at the level of group functioning and curricular development.

The dependence on healthcare institutions as the primary home for CPE has been recognized as problematic for some time. At the same time that some form of community based programs is increasing, no significant alternative to health care institutions has yet to emerge.

Finally at the macro level there seems to be some ambiguity among the primary providers of CPE students—that of denominational seminaries and church judicatories—whether the commitment to CPE is sustainable, at least partly because of financial considerations.

Along with such macro challenges, there are challenges unique to the Region itself. Notwithstanding the Region's strong financial position, continuing deficit budgets cannot be continued over the long term, especially if the overall national economy continues to struggle and investments remain flat or lose money. Furthermore, the less positive financial picture at the national level of ACPE will likely put pressure on individual regions to help alleviate that situation.

The expectation that most supervisors feel from their students, their institutions, and themselves have made it difficult for many of them to fit service in the Region into their already busy schedules. One problem at the Regional level has been finding enough persons to fill leadership positions. A second result appears to be the under functioning of committees for a number of reasons including the amount of time and the expense involved. Although that has helped the Region's finances, it may leave important regional business undone.

A third challenge has to do with the promise as well as the limitations of technology. Most members of the Region have embraced the new possibilities in communication that come with email, internet, the web, iPods, smart phones, etc. The use of conference phone calls and other networking tools, such as “mega meeting,” is bound to increase, but not without lags in acceptance, technical mistakes or breakdowns, and uneven adoption. Decisions will need to be made as to what is and what is not possible to accomplish through newer technological tools.

An additional challenge relates to the often long and slow process involved in supervisory training and the length of time that it takes to raise up new supervisors. Combined with the prospect of increasing numbers of current supervisors reaching retirement age, a shortage of qualified supervisors in the future is a real possibility.

All of this suggests the need for ACPE in general, and the NCR in particular, to become a more flexible, more agile, perhaps a leaner organization. Initially, at least, the NCR board thinks that a place to start is to look at the Region’s governing structures. That includes the board holding itself more accountable for the overall vision of the Region and exercising the stewardship of the Region’s resources.

It also includes looking at the Region’s committee structure with the recognition that the original reasons for establishing the current committees may have changed. Furthermore, the changing needs and opportunities of the Region, comparison with structures in other Regions, and developments at the national level of CPE as well as the Region’s relationship to the national level, all add incentive to consider the most efficient, effective, and responsible way to become that more flexible, adaptable, and leaner organization that we envision.

For consideration, discussion, and comment, the Board offers the following suggestions.

- 1) Among the current Standing Committees, four have clearly defined responsibilities that are essential to the Region and its on going work of educating students. Those committees are Certification, Accreditation, the Annual Conference Advisory Planning Committee, and the Nominating Committee. Each of these committees has specific work to do and, when done well, contributes to the overall effectiveness and well-being of the Region. Accordingly, these committees need to be retained and maintained. Committee membership may need to be

reviewed with respect to how many members are necessary for each to do its work well.

- 2) With respect to the other committees, the efficient use of regional resources (both financial and personnel) as well as overall effectiveness in carrying out the responsibilities associated with each committee suggest the possibilities of some changes in the following committees.

- A) Clinical members

The Region has struggled for a long time to find meaningful ways to support clinical members and appropriate avenues for the use of their gifts. The existence of a Clinical Member standing committee has not seemed to meet that purpose.

Accordingly, an option would be to disband the committee while making a greater effort to involve Clinical Members in other standing committees. The financial resources available to assist Clinical Members' participation in regional activities would be maintained at its current level. In addition, a Clinical Member could be designated as liaison or contact person for communication within the Region and among Clinical Members.

- B) History and Research

The functions of the committee—to maintain an historical record of the work of the Region and to encourage meaningful research throughout the Region—are important and need to be continued. Historically, the committee has also had some responsibility for advising the Board on potential recipients of the Distinguished Service Award and Supervisor Emeritus status. It is not clear that a committee is the most effective vehicle through which to accomplish these goals. The historical task could be addressed through an appointed/elected Regional historian/archivist continuing the role essentially played by John Thomas until his death. Research encouragement is probably best done through the various tools of communication utilized throughout the Region as well as national networks, rather than expecting a particular committee to be responsible. The designation of recipients for Distinguished Service Awards and Supervisor Emeritus status is ultimately the responsibility of the Board and

any member of the Region could be encouraged to make nominations directly to the Board.

C) Strategic Planning

This committee provided a valuable service for the Region from 2002 to 2007 in promoting the development of a mission statement, clarifying the Region's values, and working on a vision statement. It appears that the committee has taken that process as far as it can and the ongoing task of strategic planning could become the responsibility of the Board. Continuation of the committee itself may no longer be necessary.

D) Standards Committee

The development of ACPE standards has increasingly devolved to the national level. Although any member of the Region is able to respond to suggested changes in standards, it is important that the Region has official voice on the national level and membership on the ACPE Commission needs to be maintained. However, other regions have been able to have their input in the development of CPE standards without the benefit of a regional Standards Committee. The North Central Region might be well served by the election of one or more persons to serve as the Region's point person(s) in ensuring two way communication between the national commission and the Region while dispensing with an actual Standards Committee at the Regional level.

E) REM

Over the years, the REM Committee has made significant contributions on both the national and regional levels through raising awareness of the call to cultural humility, by organizing conferences, and providing educational resources that move members and regional structures toward greater cultural competency. The numbers of minority supervisory education students is at an all time high in the Region. The Committee has not received any complaints from students regarding the CPE education that they receive in our centers. The upcoming regional Annual Conference, planned by REM, is an example of the way in which one of the purposes of REM is now integrated into the Region's thinking and functioning.

There appears to be an emerging form of the activity of REM—that of holding the Board and the Region accountable for the continuing development of cultural awareness and competence in present supervisors as well as continuing the support of minority students, especially in the supervisory process. This successful work of REM suggests that a specific committee may not be necessary to continue to do this work. Financial support of the activity of REM should continue. In addition a REM member could be elected to serve on the NCR Board and continue to be the point person in calling the Region to accountability.

- F) Regional Representatives on the ACPE Board
Given the issues and decision facing the ACPE Board of Representatives, we believe that establishing regular communication between the Regional representative(s) to the ACPE Board, the Regional membership and the NCR Board is important. Regular participation in scheduled meetings and conference calls of the Board would be one option.

This proposal to revise the committee structure does not address all of the challenges noted above. It is simply a place to start and directly addresses two concerns: financial cost and the availability of persons to serve in leadership roles. Fewer committees will benefit the Region by increasing the number of potential candidates for the committees that remain.

The reduction in the number of Standing Committees would imply the possibility of creating task forces occasionally to address very specific, emerging issues for defined time frames. Under a revised structure, we wonder if the Regional Board should be expanded by one or two members if the Region's members thought that doing so would provide both greater diversity and broader representation at the leadership level.

Questions, comments, and suggestions are both welcome and very much needed.

First draft by Randy Nelson, first edit by Allen Dundek - August 5, 2010

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