



**National AHEC  
Organization**

Connecting students to careers,  
professionals to communities,  
and communities to better health.

# Connecting Students to Careers, Professionals to Communities and Communities to Better Health

NAO is the national organization that supports and advances the Area Health Education Centers(AHEC) network in improving the health of individuals and communities by transforming health care through education.

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## Volume 12, Number 4 October 2010

### ***Connecting Students to Careers, Professionals to Communities, and Communities to Better Health***

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## President's Letter

### 1. President's Letter

Dear Friends,

As the year winds down on my National AHEC Organization Presidency, I have been reflecting on what we've collectively accomplished over the past 12 months, as well as what makes the National AHEC Organization astonishing. Without a doubt, every single success over this past year has been due to the tireless work of many dedicated volunteers at the board and committee level. I feel extremely fortunate to have worked with, and felt the support of, every board member and every committee

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### **Program Directors & Center Directors**

The quarterly NAO e-news is sent electronically to all Program Directors and Center Directors whose membership in NAO is current. The NAO communications committee designed NAO e-news as an internal document to be forwarded by you to all AHEC employees and others you may choose in your state to increase their awareness of the AHEC community. By forwarding e-news to your employees and stakeholders, the good work of NAO members is shared within your region.

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member, which certainly made it easy to carry out the duties of the NAO President. I find it amazing how much gets done each month for NAO by those with demanding full-time AHEC jobs, family obligations, outside interests, and additional responsibilities beyond AHEC.

It truly has been a wonderful privilege and deep honor for me to serve as your President this past year, especially amidst a changing political environment, which, of course, included the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). The activities surrounding the PPACA made for an invigorating few months and a not a small number of sleepless nights! However, as we all know, this year saw the AHEC Program get reauthorized for 5 years with an authorizing appropriation of \$125 million, get included in the President's budget and justification for FY10, and be welcomed as a voice in the national dialogue on the recruitment, training, and distribution of the nation's primary care workforce—clearly a tremendous success that positions the AHEC program and NAO to continue and expand its impact and influence into the future.

Additionally, this past year saw NAO get awarded the five-year Federal HRSA contract to provide data and evaluation training and resources to the network via the TrACC (Training and Consultation Center) Program, establish a funding partnership with the National Health Service Corps, and successfully plan and carry out the 2010 Las Vegas NAO Conference. Each of the above accomplishments, while just a small sample of many achievements this past year, are indicative of how vigilant, dedicated, and hard-working our board and committee members are, and I consider myself fortunate to be in a leadership position and playing a small role during this extremely exciting time.

Many, many thanks go to board and committee members who worked so hard to make this past year successful: Rose Yuhos, who, as the NAO Immediate Past President, helped smooth my transition to the Presidency; Andy Fosmire, as President-Elect, always provided great support and assistance whenever called upon; Mary Mitchell, who did a great job as Secretary and churned out comprehensive meeting notes regularly; and Linda Cragin, who as Treasurer did an amazing job managing NAO's challenging financial landscape. I also want to thank the other board members who contributed in myriad ways to the success of NAO this year: Susan Moreland; Daphne Byrd; Kelley Withy; Mary Sienkiewicz, Marty Schaller, and Rick Kiovisky.

The following committee co-chairs did an amazing job this year (as they do every year), and deserve a great deal of gratitude for their leadership and hard work. NAO is stronger as a result of their contributions: Mary Sienkiewicz and Sandy Ryman (Awards); Ragan DuBose-Morris and Marty Schaller (Communications); Anne Maynard and Susan Moreland (Conference Planning); Mary Wainwright, Steve Boulanger, Michael Lischke, and Mindy Bateman (Committee on Research and Evaluation); Sarah Cunningham, Cindy Selleck, and Mary Craig (Education); Joel Davidson and Kelley Withy (Editorial Board); Susan Moreland and Kelley Withy (Fund Development); Janet Head and Edna Apostol (External Relations); Sandra Pope and Carol Giffin-Jeansonne (Collaborative Initiatives Subcommittee); Richard Perry and Brenda Fitzpatrick (Liaison Subcommittee); Jonathan Barclay and Sharon Womack (Membership Committee); Kathy Vasquez and Laurie Wylie (Public Policy); John Blossom and Michael French (Advocacy Subcommittee); Mary Sienkiewicz (By-Laws). Additional thanks go to Mary Wainwright, Gretchen Forsell, and Shivonne Laird for their leadership on TrACC. Thank you all!

A special thank you as well to Scott Sherer, Paul Rossmann, and the team at NAO Headquarters at Technical Enterprises, Inc. (TEI)—NAO's association management firm. Paul and the folks at TEI did an enormous amount of work and helped in so many ways over the course of the last year, including making sure everything ran smoothly behind the scenes at the Las Vegas NAO Conference!

I know that the National AHEC Organization will be in good hands with the incoming leadership team for 2010-2011: Andy Fosmire (President), Mary Sienkiewicz (President-Elect), Linda Cragin (Treasurer), Mary Mitchell (Secretary), Daphne Byrd (Parliamentarian), and me as Immediate Past-President. Please join me in welcoming the new leadership team; I am confident it is going to be a highly successful year!

Thank you all again for your support, trust and confidence; it really was a privilege. I wish you well and look forward to seeing you all soon.

Yours in health,  
Rob Trachtenberg  
Outgoing NAO President

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## Health Careers & Recruitment

### **1. Pathway to Excellence®: Creating Positive Work Environments for Nurses**

*By Patricia Deyo, BSN, BA, RN*

Since its inception, the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) network has sought innovative ways to tackle some of our nation's most vexing healthcare challenges. In 2003, several local AHECs in Texas teamed up with the Texas Nurses Association (TNA) to create a pioneering program aimed at combating the state's escalating nursing shortage.

The Texas Nurse-Friendly™ Program for Small and Rural Hospitals sought to improve patient care and nurse job satisfaction in small, rural Texas hospitals. To achieve Nurse-Friendly status, hospitals had to meet 12 essential elements for creating a positive work environment that enhanced nurse retention, nurse staffing, and quality of care. With the help of a five-year funding grant from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), TNA designated its first Nurse-Friendly facility in 2005.

The program was an immediate success. Hospitals that earned the Nurse-Friendly designation had significantly lower nurse vacancy and turnover rates, improved nurse staffing, and improved outcomes.<sup>1,2</sup>

With other states eager to start Nurse-Friendly programs of their own, the TNA asked the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) to help expand the program nationwide. In 2007, ANCC re-launched the program under a new name: Pathway to Excellence®.

Over the last two years, Pathway to Excellence has achieved enormous success in the United States and expanded its program both internationally and into the long-term care setting. There are now 57 Pathway to Excellence hospitals in the U.S., and the number continues to grow. Pathway-designated hospitals and healthcare organizations are committed to nurses, recognize what is important to nursing practice, and value nurses' contributions in the workplace. Patient care and outcomes have improved as a result.<sup>1,2</sup>

The crosswalk below illustrates the strategic alignment between AHEC's program goals<sup>3</sup> and Pathway to Excellence practice standards, which share a commitment to create and support healthy work environments for nurses.

AHEC Programs	Pathway to Excellence Practice Standards
Health Careers Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurses Control the Practice of Nursing</li> <li>• Competitive Wages/Salaries are in Place</li> <li>• A Balanced Lifestyle is Encouraged</li> </ul>
Training Health Professions Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation Prepares New Nurses</li> <li>• Professional Development is Provided and Utilized</li> </ul>
Supporting Health Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Work Environment is Safe and Healthy</li> <li>• Systems are in Place to Address Patient Care and Practice Concerns</li> <li>• The Chief Nursing Officer is Qualified and Participates in all Levels</li> <li>• A Balanced Lifestyle is Encouraged</li> <li>• Collaborative Interdisciplinary Relationships are Valued and Supported</li> <li>• Nurse Managers are Competent and Accountable</li> </ul>
Health and Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurses Are Recognized for Achievements</li> <li>• A Balanced Lifestyle is Encouraged</li> <li>• A Quality Program and Evidence-Based Practices are Utilized</li> </ul>

What began as a community collaboration between local AHECs and the TNA has blossomed into a formidable program to combat the global nursing shortage. Healthcare organizations that have earned the Pathway credential are deemed “best places to work” for nurses. They are the ideal starting point for AHEC members to begin a nursing career, or for more experienced RNs to flourish in a patient-centric, safe, and healthy environment.

References:

1. Martha Meraviglia, S. G. (2009). Creating a Positive Work Environment: Implementation of the Nurse-Friendly hospital criteria. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 39(2), 64-70.
2. Martha Meraviglia, S. G. (2008). Nurse-Friendly Hospital Project: Enhancing nurse retention and quality of care. *Journal of Nursing Care Quality*, 23(4), 305-313.
3. *AHEC Programs*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 9, 2010, from National Area

Health Education Center Organization:

<http://www.nationalahec.org/programs/programs.asp>

*The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), a subsidiary of the American Nurses Association (ANA), provides individuals and organizations throughout the nursing profession with the resources they need to achieve practice excellence. ANCC's internationally renowned credentialing programs certify nurses in specialty practice areas; recognize healthcare organizations for promoting safe, positive work environments through the Magnet Recognition Program® and the Pathway to Excellence® Program; and accredit providers of continuing nursing education.*

For more information about ANCC's Pathway to Excellence Program or Pathway to Excellence in Long Term Care Program™, visit [www.nursecredentialing.org/pathway](http://www.nursecredentialing.org/pathway).

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## **2. Cross-Country Collaboration: MassAHEC Network (Massachusetts) and East Texas AHEC (Texas)**

In a cross-country collaboration, the Massachusetts AHEC program (MassAHEC) and the East Texas AHEC teamed up to train community health workers (CHWs) to also better serve their patients as medical interpreters and to develop East Texas AHEC's capacity to train medical interpreters.



Massachusetts AHEC and East Texas AHEC

After training more than 100 new CHWs to meet new state certification requirements and 17 new CHW instructors through a Social Services Block Grant, an assessment by East

Texas AHEC determined that 38% used more than one language at work, 85% thought that training in medical interpretation would help them get a job, 79% thought that training in medical interpretation would help them communicate better with their clients, and 91% thought that their community needed medical interpreters. East Texas AHEC felt that incorporating medical interpretation skills for the predominantly Spanish-speaking CHWs would be beneficial to their work and career options and support the important role of this emerging health workforce team member. Collaborating with another AHEC program that understands the dual role that interpreters play in community health settings was important.

With 10 years of medical interpreter training experience, preparing more than 3,000 interpreters who speak collectively more than 35 languages, the MassAHEC Network revised and updated their 60-hour Fundamentals of Medical Interpreting© curriculum to prepare interpreters for national certification. The focus is training for the dual-role worker—the employee who may be a medical assistant or billing clerk and asked to interpret due to their language capacity. MassAHEC's curriculum was one of the curricula chosen for review in 2009 by the National Council on Interpreting in Healthcare during its development of standards for medical interpreter training. These standards are due to be released at the end of

this year.

In August, Lisa Morris, Director of Cross-Cultural Initiatives at UMass Medical School, and Nancy Esparza, Program Director for the Central Massachusetts AHEC Language Link division, trained 12 Spanish-speaking CHWs in Austin, TX. The 60-hour course was offered through 40 hours of intensive classroom training and homework each night. A train-the-trainer program will follow to support East Texas AHEC's capacity to offer the training in Texas, using MassAHEC's curriculum.

Comments from the students included:

- *“Thank you—excellent materials and presentation skills.”*
- *“Good solid information and excellent examples of real-life scenarios.”*
- *“I would highly recommend this training to all. This type of training would be beneficial to all Health Care Related Agencies.”*
- *“The instructors, all of the information learned will benefit me in the future. Thanks.”*
- *“Excelente, Fabuloso, De Maravilla (Excellent, Fabulous, Marvelous).”*
- *“The instructors were: Very prepared, experienced and professional.”*

For further information, contact Linda Cragin, Director, MassAHEC Network, at 508-856-4303, [Linda.Cragin@umassmed.edu](mailto:Linda.Cragin@umassmed.edu); or Berengaria Navarre, Special Programs Coordinator, East Texas AHEC 409-772-7884, [bcnavarr@utmb.edu](mailto:bcnavarr@utmb.edu).

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## AHEC Highlights

### 1. Oklahoma AHEC Proud of Awards and Grants

OKAHEC is proud to announce that it won the Oklahoma Blue Cross/Blue Shield “Champions for Community Health” Award for 2010. This is in recognition for the OKAHEC Rural Cancer Survivor Education Project funded by the Lance Armstrong Foundation. Over 1,000 cancer survivors from over 70 rural communities provided information on patient-physician communications, survivorship issues, and local resources. In addition, over 1,000 healthcare professionals were provided information on cancer survivorship issues and physician-patient communication. The award will soon be given at an October 23 dinner and ceremony.

OK AHEC also won the Rural Health Association of Oklahoma's “Rural Health Organization of the Year” for 2010. This award was presented at the annual conference of RHAO (Rural Health Association of Oklahoma) on Sept. 23, 2010.

HRSA has awarded Rural Health Projects, Inc./NWAHEC a Rural Health Workforce Development Grant. The grant is for three years and totals \$575,000. The grant is to develop and implement Community Campuses for Health Professional Training in two communities in Oklahoma—Enid in the northwest and Tahlequah in the northeast. The Northeast AHEC and the Oklahoma Program Office are also provided funds in this grant.

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### 2. Vermont Office of Nursing Workforce Activities Become Part of the University of Vermont AHEC Program

The University of Vermont's Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program and

the Office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning, and Development activities merged this summer, according to Elizabeth Cote, Director of the UVM AHEC Program.

“We’re pleased to make official this interdisciplinary approach to Vermont’s healthcare workforce development needs,” Cote states. “Primary care and nursing are intricately linked and adding these nursing workforce activities helps strengthen our program. This merger formalizes and streamlines the team approach to health education and healthcare workforce research that AHEC and the Office of Nursing Workforce have collaborated on for the past nine years,” she adds.

The Office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning and Development was established in December 2001 to implement the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Nursing Commission to respond to Vermont’s nursing shortage. Funding for the office was made possible by grants from the Vermont Agency of Human Services and other state and federal grants. Mary Val Palumbo, DNP, APRN, Director of the Office, notes, “Becoming a part of AHEC will provide a sustainable and efficient framework to continue to build on the education, research and development programs for Vermont’s nursing students and nurses. The biggest change for our stakeholders will be higher efficiency and greater synergy since we can leverage the grant-writing opportunities, resources, reach, and programs available through AHEC.”

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## Whos Who



Dr. Cynthia Selleck

## Dr. Cynthia Selleck's Career Move

After 16 years as Director of the University of South Florida AHEC Program, Dr. Cynthia S. Selleck moved at the end of September to the University of Alabama-Birmingham School of Nursing, where she became the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs and Practice.

Dr. Selleck served as president of NAO in 2007 and has served on a number of its committees. Over the course of her distinguished career with AHEC, Dr. Selleck brought more than \$50 million in funding to USF College of Medicine for programs that impacted the lives of thousands of medically underserved individuals, health professions students, and primary care providers. In the mid-1990s, Dr. Selleck established two centers, Gulfcoast North AHEC and Gulfcoast South AHEC, covering a nine-county service area in southwest Florida.



Anne Maynard

Anyone who has worked with Dr. Selleck knows she approaches every challenge logically, systematically and thoroughly. Many projects fall in her lap because people have great confidence in her leadership and vision. People also realize how gracious and approachable she is, always ready with an open door and a helping hand. Among the many programs Dr. Selleck helped develop is the Pre-Medical Summer Enrichment Program (PSEP), a collaborative effort with the USF College of Medicine Office of Student Diversity and Enrichment that targets underrepresented and disadvantaged youth interested in medicine. Now in its seventh year, 122 students have completed PSEP.

Stepping into the role of program director is Anne Maynard, MPH. Anne has been with USF AHEC since the fall of 2001 and has richly benefited over the years from Dr. Selleck's guidance and leadership. "The AHEC program Cynthia Selleck built at USF is remarkable," she said. "Much of its success is due to Dr. Selleck's vision and insight. We are extremely happy for the recognition she is receiving, and excited for her future." With the legacy that Dr. Selleck is leaving at USF AHEC, there is reason for everyone to be hopeful about the future.

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## Official Business/Upcoming Events

### Make Plans to Attend the NAO Fall Meeting Oct. 28-29, 2010

Click [here](#) to register. Learn more about the agenda and the hotel by clicking [here](#). Or go to [www.nationalahec.org](http://www.nationalahec.org), scroll down to Upcoming Events, click on the Fall Meeting link, and then click on the desired links on the left-hand side.

**Location:** The event takes place in Washington, DC at the Holiday Inn Capitol Oct. 28-29, 2010.

**Keynote Speaker:** Mary Wakefield, Director of HRSA, has confirmed!

**Audience:** Center directors and program directors will be able to connect with colleagues and learn about opportunities for outside collaboration and grant writing.

**Agenda:** The planned agenda includes presentations by HRSA leadership on AHEC's role in healthcare reform; panels on new and expanded AHEC collaborative activities (National Health Service Corps, workforce investment boards, teaching

health centers, and primary care extension model programs); updates on AHEC legislation, external relations, publications and evaluation activities; a town hall meeting with HRSA program officers; discussion of best practices for productive center/program director partnerships; and over 2 hours of constituency group meetings.

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