

Year-in-Review 2011

A year-end report to the ACA membership



AMERICAN COUNSELING
ASSOCIATION

From the halls of Congress in Washington, DC, to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit in Ohio, the voice of counseling was heard throughout the year. We took advantage of every opportunity possible to raise awareness of the profession and advocate for inclusion of the counseling perspective. Membership has increased from 44,958, as reported in the 2010 Year-in-Review, to 48,484 as of December 1. Our financial position at the end of FY11 (June 30, 2011) was strong, with the largest gain in revenue over expenses, \$302,554, since 2007. We continued to strengthen our employment and career offerings for members during this prolonged economic downturn. Please review this report so you can see how your dues dollars are helping to advance the profession. On behalf of the entire headquarters staff, thank you for your membership in ACA and best wishes for a very Happy New Year!

—Richard Yep, CAE
Executive Director and CEO



Significant Gains Made in Efforts to Increase Counseling Jobs and Pay

In our aggressive efforts to advocate for counseling jobs and increased pay rates, ACA achieved three major accomplishments in 2011. First, we gained appropriation of more than \$52 million for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (ESSCP) for FY11.

Second, ACA was instrumental in the enactment of legislation requiring the Department of Defense to adopt regulations to let counselors practice independently within the TRICARE health care program, which serves more than 9 million U.S. service members, dependents, and retirees.

Third, a key piece of legislation was introduced this year to put counselor pay rates on par with that of social workers. The Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2011 (S. 604), was introduced by Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and John Barrasso (R-WY). This legislation would establish Medicare coverage for both licensed professional counselors and marriage and family therapists, at the same payment rates and in the same treatment settings as clinical social workers.

Counseling Perspectives Gaining Broader Acceptance; Requests for Input From ACA Increase

More and more organizations, as well as government agencies, are responding to ACA's call for inclusion of the counseling perspective in any program involving mental health or other areas of work in which counseling professionals are engaged.

DSM-5 Revision

Input from the counseling profession will be considered when the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* is revised and published in 2013. ACA developed a task force to guide the profession's response to the American Psychiatric Association's *DSM-5*. ACA sent a letter in November to the APA President outlining concerns over several proposed changes. Among the concerns expressed were: 1) that insufficient scientific and validation data is in place to back up the proposed revisions, 2) a lack of transparency in the development process, and 3) the need for a rewrite of the definition of mental disorder, which, as it stands now, implies that all mental disorders have a biological component. ACA will continue to be actively engaged in this process.

Review of Title X Program

In May, ACA responded to a request from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to be involved in the first comprehensive review in its 20-year history of Title X, the federal program providing comprehensive family planning and related preventative health services. ACA provided a social learning theory-based counseling model for integrating counseling into the agency program. HHS plans to continue working with ACA after the program has been revised.

Revision of Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing

ACA also provided input for the revision of the seminal resource for the development and use of standardized tests and assessment instruments: the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. Among the recommendations was the need to include professional counselors when providing examples of qualified test professionals.

Updates to Occupational Outlook Handbook

ACA was once again asked to provide updates to another major government document: the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. The 2012–13 edition contains ACA-recommended updates for various counseling specialties.

NIMH Coalition for Research Progress

The counseling profession also was represented in April by ACA's participation in the 7th annual meeting of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Professional Coalition for Research Progress. A focus of the meeting was on research indicating that the suicide rate in the U.S. has been climbing for the past 6 years. A goal was set to reduce the suicide mortality rate by 20% over the next 5 years.

The New York Times, Other Major Media Outlets Now Include Counseling

ACA and the counseling profession were featured prominently in the May 22, 2011 edition of *The New York Times*. Inclusion of the counseling profession in the front-page article focusing on the decline in number of males in the profession was directly attributable to the careful nurturing of a relationship with *NYT* reporters by ACA staff. Staff responded proactively to earlier articles that

had mentioned all the helping professions except counseling. ACA also responded to inquiries and gained exposure in *WebMD*, *USA Today* magazine, NPR, *Redbook*, *APA Monitor*, and other outlets.



New Orleans Conference Registration Highest in 10 Years

With 4,095 attendees, the 2011 New Orleans conference broke a 10-year record and surpassed budgeted revenue goals. Keynote speakers Dr. Judith S. Beck and CNN's Soledad O'Brien were highlights of the 5-day event, which was cosponsored by the Louisiana Counseling Association. Technology upgrades at the conference included the introduction of online session evaluations and CE processing, eliminating the paper evaluation forms of the past, and an interactive Expo floor plan that was posted online to boost visibility for our 100+ exhibitors. More than 400 attendees signed up in New Orleans for the [2012 ACA Conference & Expo](#) in San Francisco, which will also include a celebration of ACA's 60th Anniversary.



Record Attendance at Third ACA Institute for Leadership Training

The ACA Institute for Leadership Training brought 140 current and emerging leaders from ACA Branches, Divisions, and Regions to Alexandria, VA in late July for seminars on advocacy strategies, issues facing the counseling profession, and effective leadership. Participants then put their advocacy skills to work, travelling to Capitol Hill to ask their members of Congress to cosponsor the Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act and to support the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program.

Several leadership services offered throughout the year have gone electronic, saving time, money, and trees.



ACA Code of Ethics Revision Launched, Member Consults on Ethics Grows

This year, we began the process of revising the *ACA Code of Ethics*; the revised version will be published in 2014. The Code was last revised in 2005.

Individual member consults and advice on ethics remain a highly popular member benefit, with more than 6,000 consultations provided via telephone and emails. Five cases regarding alleged violations of the Code of Ethics were accepted this year for adjudication and are in various stages of resolution.

In February, ACA filed an amicus curiae brief with Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in the *Ward v. Wilbanks et al.* case in response to an appeal of the decision rendered in July 2010. The case involves a counselor education student, Julea Ward, who refused to counsel a gay practicum client. The judge had ruled in favor of the university, and, the ACA Code of Ethics was supported.



New Webinar Series Launched; More Podcasts Developed

In September, ACA launched a [webinar series](#) to bring additional professional development and CE opportunities to members. Two successful webinars, presented by Dr. Sam Gladding and Dr. Courtland Lee, were held, with more than 400 total registrants. Watch for more webinars in 2012!

Ten additional podcasts were recorded in 2011, bringing the total to 27. CE credit is now available for most ACA podcasts. A wide variety of CE opportunities are available through ACA's [Online Learning section](#) of the website.

Career Services, Private Practice Support for Members Expands

Supporting and assisting members with employment concerns, ACA has provided more than 2,000 career consultations by telephone and through the Career Center at the ACA Conference & Expo. To help members succeed in their private practice, ACA contracted with Dr. Anthony Centore, a successful private practitioner in Boston, who heads a team of 12 counselors. Centore serves as ACA's private practice consultant, providing individual consults to members and offering advice and perspectives through his column in *Counseling Today*, as well as posts on the [ACA blog](#). Many new resources on finding jobs were posted to the Career Center on the ACA website this year, and we continue to immediately post jobs we learn about on the Rebecca's List tab of the ACA blog.



Membership Increases to 48,484; Goal for FY12 is 50,000

Fueled by an ever-expanding list of membership benefits, membership has grown to 48,484, a 7.8% increase since December 1, 2010. The introduction of new benefits and expansion of existing programs and services has spurred growth to a level not seen since 2003 and increased retention to 80%.



FY11 Ends with Largest Gain Since 2007; New Audit Committee Formed

ACA's finances continue to grow. The year ending June 30, 2011 posted the largest gain, \$302,554, since 2007. Increases in membership, investments, conference and publications revenues, and the HPSO affinity program contributed. Two new committees were added to strengthen ACA's fiduciary responsibility: the Audit Committee and the Investment Subcommittee. During the inaugural year of the Audit Committee, the group hired a new audit firm, McGladrey and Pullen, implemented their new charter, oversaw the audit process, and reviewed internal control processes. The Investment Subcommittee simplified the investment groupings based on time horizons: short-term, mid-term, and long-term. They reduced the number of board-designated funds and created targets and spending plans where appropriate.



ACA Invests in Information Technology

At the October 2010 Governing Council meeting, funding was granted to revitalize ACA's information technology infrastructure. ACA's servers, computers, and software were at the end of their useful "life" and were badly in need of replacement. In 2011, our goal was to empower staff with a better, faster, more reliable systems environment. In February, we provided 35 new laptops to staff, moved our servers to the cloud (data center), outsourced the IT help desk, and upgraded our software. In prior years, it was not unusual to have servers down for hours or even days; now, it is rarely more than 10 minutes. Our shared infrastructure vision includes: making processes and systems member-centric—designed for members and easier for them to use; training staff to embrace new technology; and enabling staff to make better decisions by becoming data driven.

Last year's online election was a huge success, with the highest voter turnout in 5 years. We saved trees, money, at least 500 hours of staff time, and, more members engaged in the process.

Positions Added to Support New Member Services; Staff Training, Communication a Priority

ACA's Human Resources Department added three new positions during 2011: *Counseling Today* Staff Writer, Professional Affairs Administrative Assistant, and a Grassroots Advocacy Coordinator. Our current staff count is 57 with 50 full time employees, five part-time employees, and two part-time paid interns.

To enhance professional development of staff, ACA inaugurated a Leadership Development Program in 2011, and four staff members are actively involved. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessments were administered to staff in November and follow-up training will occur in 2012. EAP sessions were offered onsite this year as a way to increase participation by staff who may not have been able to travel to the provider's site. Both onsite sessions were fully booked and staff was very happy to have this benefit brought onsite.



ACA Social Media Has Gone Viral!

ACA unveiled its official [Facebook page](#) in July, which now has 2,250+ friends. The ACA blog at [my.counseling.org](#) has grown dramatically in 2011. With 58 bloggers, the blog has become *the* place for thousands of counselors to share, vent, inform, entertain, and connect with their peers. This year, bloggers weighed in on a variety of topics from private practice tips to cyber-bullying, the DSM revision, and Facebook rules for counselors as well as trending topics such as the sexual abuse scandal at Penn State. The blog with the most views in 2011: “[Building a Six-Figure Counseling Practice: How Much Can a Master’s Level Counselor Make?](#)” posted by Anthony Centore, ACA’s Private Practice Consultant. The post had 4,450+ views. The first ever bilingual post was made in May: a Spanish-language entry entitled “[Hermanita](#)” and its English companion piece, “[Baby Sister](#).”

ACA’s [LinkedIn](#) page (5,300+ members) and [Twitter](#) account (3,000+ followers) also grew in 2011. A new staff Social Media team was formed to guide initiatives and develop best practices.



New Journals Partnership Broadens Access, Brings State-of-the Art Publishing Technology to ACA

A major journals partnership with Wiley-Blackwell was announced in 2011 and will be launched in January 2012. Wiley-Blackwell will publish the *Journal of Counseling & Development* and nine division journals on behalf of ACA. This initiative brings ACA’s journal publishing to a new level that more fully uses the capabilities of the latest publishing technologies and greatly expands the global visibility and readership of ACA’s journals. All of the content for each journal—back to Volume 1, Issue 1—has been digitized and thus will be fully searchable, which will enhance the dissemination and use of the content, increase article citations, and positively impact journal rankings. Article citations will increase and thus journal rankings will improve, expanding the global visibility of ACA journals. Going green took on new meaning at ACA as nearly 17,000 members opted to receive electronic-only access to *JCD*.



Ten New Books Published in 2011; Revenue Tops \$1 Million for the First Time

Ten new books were published this year, including the highly popular *Developing & Managing Your School Guidance & Counseling Program*, now in its fifth revision, as well as new editions of *The Creative Arts in Counseling*, and *Play Therapy: Basics and Beyond*.

Counseling Today Expands; New Online Version Launched

CT Online overhauled its section of the website (ct.counseling.org) and now provides new content daily during the week. In addition to featuring the contents of *Counseling Today* magazine, including in a new digital flip book version available exclusively to ACA members, *CT Online* now offers links to research and articles of interest from all over the Internet as well as original pieces written by the *CT* staff. The website also invites counselors to share information about their work with the *CT* staff for possible inclusion in future issues of the magazine.



Counselors Care!

ACA responded to two American Red Cross calls for professional counselors to assist in disaster mental health operations following the devastating winds and rain of Hurricane Irene, which struck the East Coast in August, and after the deadly tornadoes that hit Joplin, MO, and other Midwestern and Southern states last summer.



Other Highlights of 2011

For the first time, the ACA National Awards nominations were received in electronic format instead of print. In addition, the review process was completed electronically. The 2012 National Awards Ceremony will take place at the ACA Conference & Expo in San Francisco.



A Look Ahead

- Celebration and reflection on 60 years in operation as the American Counseling Association
- Continued work on the *DSM* revision advocating for the views of counseling professionals
- Introduction of a Member-Get-A-Member recruitment program and other campaigns to increase membership to 50,000
- Additional enhancements to technology infrastructure with investment in a completely new website
- New announcements regarding valuable affinity programs
- [ACA Conference & Expo](#) in San Francisco, March 21–25, 2012, in partnership with the California Counseling Association
- ACA Institute for Leadership Training, July 25–28, in the Washington, DC area
- Future conference sites—2013: Cincinnati, 2014: Honolulu, 2015: Orlando

The universal definition of counseling was created in 2010 as part of the “20/20 A Vision for the Future of Counseling” initiative. Since then it has been endorsed by 29 professional organizations. 20/20 is co-sponsored by ACA and the American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB).

“Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals.”

