

- 8 AASCB licensure portability plan moves closer to reality
- 10 Graduate Student Association among topics of student summit
- 14 Counselors putting more faith in spiritual assessment techniques
- 16 Senate briefing spotlights school-based mental health services
- 18 Therapists take a closer look at the mind-music connection
- 20 ACA national award winners recognized at annual convention
- 38 Using the 'community standard' to set fees in private practice
- 41 Pictorial coverage of the ACA/CCA Convention in Montréal



DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Letters to the Editor
- 5 From the President
- 6 Executive Director's Message
- 12 Finding Your Way
- 24 Resource Reviews
- 32 Division, Region & Branch News
- 36 ACA Journal Spotlight
- 39 Student Focus
- 51 Classifieds

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WASHINGTON UPDATE



Written and compiled by
Scott Barstow, Christopher
Campbell and Brian Altman

House budget stalls, Senate budget grows before spring recess

The House of Representatives adjourned April 6 for a two-week recess after failing to vote on a Fiscal Year 2007 budget resolution. Squabbling among appropriators, conservatives and moderates left House leaders without the votes needed to pass the budget. House Majority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) has vowed to continue negotiations after recess. Failure to pass a budget resolution would make it more difficult for Congress to enact large budget or tax cuts later in the year.

The Senate narrowly approved its version of the budget resolution on March 16. During budget consideration, the Senate adopted an amendment offered by Sens. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) to provide an additional \$7 billion to educa-

Continued on page 34

Keynotes praise, challenge counselors

Lewis charges the profession to serve as a 'moral anchor'; Gore encourages convention attendees to embrace opportunities

BY JONATHAN ROLLINS

Editor's note: Both audio and video downloads of the keynote addresses delivered at the ACA/CCA Convention are available on the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

If counselors occasionally feel that their work goes unnoticed or underappreciated by the world at large, those in attendance at the American Counseling Association/Canadian Counselling Association Convention in Montréal received a healthy dose of both gratitude and encouragement. Both Stephen Lewis and Mary Elizabeth "Tipper" Gore, the convention's keynote speakers, readily and enthusiastically acknowledged

the pivotal role that counselors play in society.

"It's a tremendous privilege to speak (at this convention)," said Lewis, the U.N. secretary-general's special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa and one of *TIME* magazine's "100 most influential people in the world" for 2005. "I have a huge admiration for the profession of counseling. ... You are people who care deeply about the human condition."

Gore, the mental health policy adviser to former President Bill Clinton and the wife of former Vice President Al Gore, told the audience, "Professional counselors have a very special place in my heart. ... I know how very important your work is." She told the assembled counselors



Tipper Gore

that they perform a variety of important tasks, from saving lives to making sure that people live their lives more fully, from keeping families intact to helping people from all walks of life reach their potential. "You are not choosing an easy road in life



Stephen Lewis

when you decide to work in the mental health field," said Gore, who asked the counselors in attendance to think about the victories they had achieved and to celebrate each other's indispensable contributions with a

Continued on page 28

Counseling summit could shape profession's future

'Identity' crisis surfaces as crucial issue at '20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling'

BY JONATHAN ROLLINS

"Identity" was the buzzword that emerged from the most recent counseling summit, held

April 1 during the American Counseling Association/Canadian Counselling Association Convention in Montréal.

Following on the heels of the initial summit, which took place Jan. 11 at the American Association of State Counseling Boards Annual Conference in Phoenix, 20 delegates from a wide range of counseling organizations met in Montréal to identify and discuss issues they believe must be addressed to ensure the profession's future health.

Many issues were given

voice, but one in particular spoke most clearly to those in attendance. "I believe the major issue that the counseling profession must address is identity," said Lynn Linde, the delegate representing ACA's Southern Region. "While we all identify ourselves as counselors, in discussion it is clear that not all counselors self-identify as counselors first and their specialty area second. ACA began as a coalition of organizations, and some counselors believe that model is how we should continue to operate. I believe, as do

others, that we are all counselors first, that there is a core body of knowledge and skills and a purpose that unites us (and that) we need additional training and experience to be effective in the (specialty) area in which we chose to practice. While this may sound like a chicken-or-egg discussion, it lies at the heart of our profession. Are we one profession or many related professions under an umbrella? Until we decide this issue, it will be hard for us to move ahead.

Continued on page 26

PERIODICALS MAIL-NEWSPAPER HANDLING

How can we expect the public, legislators, stakeholders and others to instantly recognize us when we are not in agreement as to who we are?"

"The identity question permeates everything we, as professional counselors, do," she continued. "I believe that once we decide this issue, we can move the profession and the professional association forward. Then the secondary issues of accreditation of counselor education programs, credentialing of counselors, public relations, public policy and legislation efforts, serving clients, etc., can be decided."

Rosemarie Woodruff, the Western Region delegate, expressed similar sentiments. "I believe any effort to move our profession forward needs to begin with clarifying and embracing our identity as professional counselors," she said. "Medical doctors and social workers have traditions that are embedded in the societal fabric, and we have not yet carved out our niche. We need to define our unique contribution to the mental health field and educate the public. In order to speak with one voice, we need to develop a common philosophy that includes all specialties."

The counselor summit meetings are phase one of "20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling," an effort co-sponsored by AASCB and ACA. Phase one sessions are limited to identifying and discussing the issues that are impeding the profession's progress. Phase two sessions will focus on defining action steps to resolve those issues, while phase three will consist of implementing these action steps.

A significant undertaking

"My hope is that we can find common ground that will strengthen the profession of counseling and our identity in the public domain," ACA President Patricia Arredondo said in speaking about her hopes for the counseling summits. "Second, I would like to see us have a stronger ongoing relationship between ACA and AASCB. This would help counselors know that there is a central place where issues can be taken and resources can be found."

The profession needs to have a more unified approach if it hopes to achieve additional legislative and licensure victories, she said. But that unity also needs to extend to preparing as a profession to meet the needs and



Twenty delegates from a wide range of counseling organizations met in Montréal for the 20/20 summit, which was facilitated by ACA Immediate Past President Sam Gladding. A separate group of delegates also met in January at the AASCB conference in Phoenix.

challenges of specific groups, from the growing numbers of senior citizens in the United States to its emerging young Latino population. "Counselors must be at the forefront together to be responsive to changing populations and their needs," Arredondo said.

Sam Gladding, immediate past president of ACA and the facilitator of the phase one meetings, views the "20/20" effort as critical to ensuring the profession's stability and well-being. "Counseling is a relatively young profession — much younger than psychology, social work, psychiatry, nursing, etc.," he said. "We need to be more proactive if we are going to be a core mental health profession. We, as counselors, bring many specialties to the table of wellness with our emphasis on development and prevention as well as treatment. However, we have not been as good at advocating for what we do and our own uniqueness as some other professions. Hopefully, this effort will help us all to be more united in a focus and an emphasis and will help us not only with our identity but with a purposefulness in our energy. ... I think the 20/20 summit is crucial to envisioning where we can be in counseling. If we can see more clearly where we want to be in the year 2020, we are much more likely to get there as a profession."

ACA Chief Professional Officer David Kaplan also views the 20/20 undertaking as a crucial effort for counseling's future. "Our splintering and lack of unity is hurting the profession,

confusing the public and interfering with legislative efforts," he said. "There have been periodic attempts to do something like (the 20/20 counseling summits) in the past — Chi Sigma Iota led a noteworthy effort a number of years back — but I do think this is historic because, as far as I know, it is the first time all of the major players in counseling are coming together to hammer out a vision for the future: ACA, AASCB, NBCC, CRCC, CACREP, CORE, CSI, all ACA divisions and all ACA regions. That makes 30 counseling organizations working together to plan for the future."

The evolution of '20/20'

Kaplan credited both the AASCB and ACA presidential teams for their teamwork and thorough planning in getting the 20/20 effort off the ground. "The initial impetus came from the AASCB presidential team (Jim Wilson, Charlie Gagnon and J. Barry Mascari)," he said. "They realized that multiple variations in state licensing titles and regulations were hampering efforts to develop and implement the AASCB licensure portability plan. The AASCB presidential team then approached the ACA presidential team and asked if it would make sense to co-sponsor a summit to address the lack of unity in the counseling profession. After a series of meetings, it was decided to expand the summit to proactively look at all issues that need to be addressed to move the profession forward over the next 15 years.

"Sam Gladding came up with the creative name of 20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling to signify that we are not only looking at thorny issues that need to be resolved currently but also proactively planning for a clear 20/20 vision of where we want the future of professional counseling to be in the year 2020."

AASCB Past President Jim Wilson said two circumstances led its leadership team to conclude that the counseling profession sorely needed to hold a summit meeting. One was AASCB's work to formulate a license portability plan (for a related story, see page 8). In the process, he said, it became "very clear that requirements were very different from state to state. Also, there were different kinds of counselors being licensed. In essence, as I understand the situation, counselor licensure was thought to be a unifying event rather than one which has, on a number of levels, further fragmented the profession."

More red flags were raised by the dissertation of J. Barry Mascari, now AASCB's president-elect, which addressed the relationship between counselor licensing standards and violations. Mascari found that the standards were so varied that he couldn't conduct the study he had planned. "The results indicated that the top three issues the counseling profession was facing in the future were professional identity, portability and a wide variation of licensing standards," he said. "Clearly, the issues were intertwined."

"In my study," Mascari said, "I found that our profession has too many individual conferences, too many codes of ethics and we are pulled in directions that reduce our power rather than create synergy. ... My findings suggested that counselor identity was less clear now than a decade ago. In my review, I speculated that the profession spent so much time on achieving licensure that we never thought about the answer to the question, once we were successful (with licensure), of 'Now what?' Jim, Charlie Gagnon and I discussed this at our retreat and agreed that the greatest threat to portability was the identity issue and the threats posed by disaffiliation from ACA. We believed that our work in licensure was like a traffic-copter — we could see the larger view, and the future was not as positive as we like to delude ourselves into thinking."

Meeting in Montréal

At the summit in Montréal, AASCB President Charlie Gagnon stressed to the delegates that "The idea of keeping the profession unified is very important. That way, when we want to accomplish something, it will make it that much easier."

Gladding also encouraged the delegates to look at the big picture. "I hope we'll think about the profession of counseling (during this summit) and not just a particular group that we have an allegiance to," he said.

For the next three hours, delegates raised a variety of issues, from orienting students to the

profession and bridging multi-cultural talk with action to increasing the number of practitioners in leadership roles and developing a counseling think tank. But much of the discussion centered around strengthening counselor identity and halting fragmentation of the profession. One delegate voiced the need for counseling entities to become "issue-driven instead of turf-driven."

As the 20/20 summit wound down, Gladding asked the delegates about their vision for the counseling profession in the year 2020. Among the responses, delegates voiced hope that the profession would be:

- More unified and synergetic
- The first group prospective clients think of when they need therapy
- Offering the most cost-effective, nonpathologizing form of treatment
- Leading the way for social justice by making quality counseling services available to all people in society
- Achieving common ground with portability and licensure across the states

Asked for his impressions of the summit meetings in Phoenix and Montréal, Kaplan said, "I have been very impressed. The delegates have worked hard to delineate the issues that need to be addressed to move the profession forward. There has been a clear consensus, with only one dissenting voice, that counseling needs to view itself as one united profession with a variety of specializations. This would bring us into balance with physicians, lawyers, nurses and many other professions."

Mascari also believes the counseling summits have been productive but readily acknowledges that much hard work and many tough decisions lie ahead. "Several people at the sessions said if this summit is going to move forward and have any positive outcomes, we are all going to need to be willing to give up something," he said. "What that something is remains to be seen. ... There are some complex issues that we need to address, making this process not an easy one. However, we all need to take a risk if we are to make significant progress toward our future as a profession."

"We know where we should be, where it would be in our best interests to be as a profession," he continued. "The difficult part is the gulf that exists in between, the areas of risk where each interested party has something to

lose. However, if we could take some magical leap across that gulf, the counseling profession would be on its way to a healthy future. The ship is big enough to carry all of us in the future. The question is whether (individuals in) a profession that prides itself on diversity can accept each

other by putting aside our small differences for the good of the profession. The leadership teams believe that failure to move forward is not an option because, in the end, it will be the clients who suffer. Licensing has led our profession in a wider direction, whereby we brought a new, non-

medical, less pathologized approach to mental health. But if we are not careful, our professional cousins — psychology and social work — may steal our own strengths and contributions right out from under us."

Counseling Today will continue to provide updates on the

progress of "20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling." ■

Jonathan Rollins is the editor-in-chief of *Counseling Today*. E-mail comments about this article to jrollins@counseling.org.

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