



## **NOCA News**

**Fall 2009**

### **President and Executive Director's Report**

It is hard to believe that we are already into the fourth quarter of the year and the NOCA Annual Educational Conference is almost here. We hope you will have the opportunity to join us at this year's Conference. You'll be sure to learn about the many new and exciting things going on in the field of credentialing and, of course, connect with your peers and experts in the industry. Even with the many opportunities NOCA provides to network and learn through different forms of media and electronic communication, there is simply no substitute for the face-to-face connections and knowledge sharing made possible at the Annual Conference.

As we prepare for the Conference, we always take time to evaluate the past year to see how our organization has progressed and how successful we have been based on our strategic pillars. Recognizing these accomplishments and the people who helped make them possible is always a highlight for us at the Conference. Right now, there are two key areas we would like to highlight for you: Research and Collaboration. These two strategic pillars have played a significant role in the accomplishments of NOCA in 2009.

We are so proud of the Research and Development Committee for all of the hard work they have been doing. A cornerstone of our member services is to ensure that our members are provided with high quality research and information. This allows them to operate the top quality credentialing programs while being successful financially. The Committee released its first major study in early 2009, entitled, *Practices and Requirements of Renewal Programs in Professional Licensure and Certification*. This study, which has received significant praise throughout the industry, is an example of the significant value NOCA can provide its members in helping them develop high quality programs.

We would like to offer our thanks to all who participated in the recent survey related to the "business of certification." Results of the survey will be available at the Annual Conference. The report will provide benchmark data to help you compare your organization to other credentialing bodies based on size, industry sector served, and other categories. As an example, you will gain an understanding of how other organizations are identifying key revenue sources and allocating their expenses accordingly. We are confident that this study is just the first in a long series of research studies specifically designed to help you better understand and improve the business side of your programs.

We have come to quickly realize that research does not happen in a vacuum. To gather the data we need, and share results with those who can gain the most value from it, we must maintain a broad network of trusted partners and colleagues. NOCA's strategic pillar of Collaboration has become even more critical in providing our members the best information available. As an example, Jim recently was invited to attend a research summit focusing on nurse specialty certification, coordinated by the American Board of Nursing Specialty (ABNS) and the Competency & Credentialing Institute (CCI). The summit was a significant success, with involvement from a wide variety of nursing specialty certification bodies. The experience clearly showed how NOCA can work closer with its members and other groups such as ABNS to further

the knowledge and improve the services we provide. We would like to thank both ABNS and CCI for inviting NOCA to participate and we look forward to increased collaboration in the future.

Understanding the strength that can come from collaboration, NOCA has taken the lead in bringing together the Chief Elected Officers and Chief Staff Officers of organizations that serve the credentialing community. This is the first time that we are aware of such a group coming together. We are truly excited about facilitating a process that could lead to opportunities for collaborative initiatives and, of course, greater value to the community we all serve. The groups involved in this effort include both trade associations and accreditation bodies serving the credentialing community. We are eager to get started, with the initial meeting set for December of 2009.

We look forward to seeing you in Phoenix. You'll hear more about NOCA's accomplishments in 2009, and your input at the Conference will help us learn how we can further improve, ensuring you continue to gain value from your membership and support of NOCA.

Sincerely,



Paul Grace, MS, CAE  
President



Jim Kendzel, MPH  
Executive Director

## **Headline Articles**

### **Benchmarking Renewal Programs to Inform Change**

Cheryl L. Wild, Ph.D.  
Wild & Associates, Inc.

According to a survey completed by members of the [Certification Network Group](#) in December of 2008 (Wild, 2008) more than 50 percent of those respondents indicated that benchmarking is a tool they use for implementing change. As an instructor of benchmarking for a graduate management program, I was curious about exactly how certification programs were using benchmarking. At about the same time as this survey, the excellent report by James Henderson, *Practices and Requirements of Renewal Programs in Professional Licensure and Certification*, (NOCA, 2008) was published.

In the benchmarking lingo, *Practices and Requirements of Renewal Programs in Professional Licensure and Certification* is an excellent example of a consortium benchmarking study. It includes a literature review of 39 articles, reports, papers, Web pages, book chapters, two books (often called secondary benchmarking), and the results of a survey of 331 organizations (often called primary benchmarking).

Now, about nine months after the publishing of this benchmarking information, five certification executives have provided insight into how benchmarking information is used in certification. These executives have answered the following three questions concerning their use of the NOCA study *Practices and Requirements of Renewal Programs in Professional Licensure and Certification*:

1. What part of the NOCA report did you find most helpful?
2. How are you using the report?
3. Will this report result in changes in how work is done?

Although the results of each organization's review of their renewal process may ultimately differ, the process of using the report is similar.

What part of the NOCA report did you find most helpful? By far the most popular content in the report is the section on the definition of continuing competence, different approaches to assessing continuing competence, and the purpose of continuing professional development. Cyndi Miller Murphy, Executive Director of the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation, indicated that the "definitions are a very interesting and valuable part of the report. It provides a good concise piece to provide to boards, which saves the executive directors the work of having to develop a similar piece."

How are you using the report? In general, typical uses of benchmarking studies are to provide information about what other organizations are doing, to build consensus, to provide breakthrough ideas, to help in designing work processes, and to design marketing. Certification executives were asked to comment about each of these uses.

Most of the organizations interviewed have used the study to provide information about what other organizations are doing and to build consensus among their councils or boards. Darlene Leuschke, Administrator at the American Optometric Association, indicated that commissioners for the Paraoptometric Certification program have reviewed the report and have it on their September agenda for discussion. Karen Plaus, Executive Director of the National Board on Certification and Recertification of Nurse Anesthetists, indicated that the Council on Recertification reviewed the benchmarking study in detail. They also conducted a recertification practice analysis. The Council combined the results of the practice analysis and the NOCA report and came up with recommendations. Now the Nurse Anesthetists are reviewing the recommendations and providing feedback.

None of the certification executives felt that the NOCA report provided any breakthrough ideas, but the findings did sometimes expand thinking. For example, President and CEO of the Financial Planners Standard Council of Canada indicated that thinking around portfolios had expanded after looking at the study.

All of the executives agreed that it was premature to be using the results for designing processes or for marketing. Changing the requirements for recertification takes time – including research, consensus building, notification of stakeholders, and phasing in the change – and the NOCA report has only been out for less than a year. Jim Henderson, author of the report commented, "One of the things I learned in doing the study is that the pace of change is slow. Even the groups that are using the document to guide policy formation are looking to future change, since changing the contract for the already certified professional is a major undertaking."

Paul Grace, President and CEO of the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, indicated that they used benchmarking for marketing purposes in their 2001 redesign of their continuing competency program. They targeted their benchmarking to certification programs in the same work environment with occupational therapists and used the results to educate the consumer on how the new continuing competency requirements compared to those in other programs, both in terms of cost and content. Cyndi Miller Murphy also believes the certificants will be interested in hearing about how other organizations look at continuing competency. She states, "Our constituency often looks to other professions to compare requirements. For years

physicians didn't have any requirements for recertification and nurses complained that they had to recertify and doctors did not have to. Now board certified physicians have rigorous requirements for recertification and nurses no longer complain about their requirements."

Will this report result in changes in how work is done? Probably, but all agreed that it is too soon to know. As indicated above, changing recertification requirements is a long process, requiring design and education of certificants. As certification executives mentioned, many of these changes may take years to phase in. The changes may increase costs for certificants, how certificants prepare for recertification, and the work that certification staff perform during the renewal process.

In discussing his plan for using the report, Cary List cautions readers to remember the following:

"This is a benchmarking survey, not a study of best practices over time. It is a first step. It can provide good input but should not be used as a final assessment of best practices. It should be used in conjunction with the certification body's own research and analysis of what is appropriate for their own industry. Don't just take this as the gospel and assume it is appropriate for your own organization. You need to do your own due diligence and use this report to help inform your decisions."

Cyndi Miller Murphy agrees on the need for a rigorous method of identifying best practices. She indicated that the American Board of Nursing Specialties will be meeting in the fall and one of their agenda items is to develop a research agenda for nursing certification. It is hoped that this research will provide some evidence-based decisions for selecting criteria for renewal.

In some industries, benchmarking surveys identify best-practice organizations by defining the criteria for measuring a best practice. Industries often measure best practices in terms of cost, cycle time, or quality. In the certification industry, defining the criteria for best practice in renewal is still problematic. If the criterion for success is the lowest cost per candidate, counting continuing education units may continue to be the "best practice." However, if best practice for renewal of certification is defined as assuring that certificants maintain "quality" knowledge/skills in their field, and if this quality can be measured, then best-practice organizations may lead to expanded practices in measuring continuing competence.

If you have suggestions for measuring the effectiveness of your renewal criteria, please send them to Dr. Cheryl Wild at [cheryl@wildandassociates.com](mailto:cheryl@wildandassociates.com).

### **The Washington Report**

Congressional leaders took a break from heated policy debates to recess for the month of August, and reconvened in early September.

Before breaking, Congress focused on the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the creation of a "Consumer Financial Protection Agency" as proposed by the Obama Administration, cap and trade legislation, and the confirmation of a new Associate Justice to the United States Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor. The biggest – and the most controversial – debate has been over reforming the health care delivery system. With an estimated over 47 million Americans lacking any health insurance, President Obama campaigned on reforming health care last year and has placed passage of meaningful reform at the top of his must-pass agenda for 2009.

Several bills to reform health care have been introduced in the House and Senate. On July 15, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee approved passage of the Affordable Health Choices Act. Senior members of the Senate Finance Committee are still meeting private to see if a bipartisan agreement on health care is possible. The House Energy and Commerce Committee voted out its bill, America's Affordable Health Choices Act (H.R. 3200), on July 31. The bill combines the work of three different congressional committees with jurisdiction over health care. Hot button issues include requirements of employers to provide health care coverage and the so called "public option", as well as the cost of any reform bill that might emerge.

The House and Senate HELP committee bills address workforce development of health care occupations and professionals, in part to attempt to increase the supply of qualified providers, but also as a means of increasing health care quality. The Senate HELP bill contains a provision that would create the National Health Care Workforce Commission. The Commission would be charged with disseminating information on health care workforce education and training capacity and instruction, recognizing efforts at federal, state and local levels to develop and offer health care career pathways of proven effectiveness. The term "health care career pathways" as defined by the bill includes "occupational certification".

The Commission membership will include individuals with national recognition for their expertise in, among other things, health care workforce education and training, and must include, among others, a representative of the health care workforce and health professionals.

Another provision of the Senate HELP bill would establish a health care workforce development grant program to support the development of health care workforce development strategies at the state and local level. A state receiving a grant would be expected, among other things, to identify high demand health care sectors for purposes of planning career pathways. Such pathways as defined by the bill could include "occupational certifications" hence these grants represent opportunities for NOCA to heighten awareness of certification as a career pathway for health care workers.

The House bill, as with the Senate HELP bill, contains provisions addressing the health workforce. In both instances, much of the attention is given to specific high-need fields, such as primary care and nursing through scholarships and loan repayment benefits. It also, like the HELP bill, has some general provisions that attempt to improve the data or understanding of the larger health workforce. The House bill would establish an Advisory Committee on Health Workforce Evaluation and Assessment, charged with, among other things, making recommendations on classifications of the health workforce to ensure consistency of data collection on the health workforce. Unlike the National Health Care Workforce Commission authorized in the HELP bill, this Advisory Committee does not seem to be charged with a larger workforce development agenda.

The Senate Finance Committee is also expected to address health care workforce issues. It has reported that several studies and policy experts have called for a renewed effort to develop a "comprehensive and coordinated national strategy" to address workforce shortages and encourage training in key focus areas that support delivery system reform goals, such as improving care coordination, health provider use of health information technology and increasing access to primary care services. The committee has noted that some recommendations have called for the establishment of a "national health workforce commission" that would be tasked with advising Congress and the Secretary on health care workforce policy and recommendations. Others have promoted, at minimum, a need to provide additional resources to support the workforce-related activities of CMS and HRSA and to encourage increased collaboration among these agencies.

NOCA's government relations team is monitoring the health care debate and continues to monitor the progress of reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The House Education and Labor Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness Subcommittee held a series of hearings on the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment this spring. NOCA submitted testimony articulating that occupational certification can play an important role in getting displaced Americans back to work. The Senate HELP Committee has also begun to hold hearings on WIA. NOCA also submitted testimony in July. NOCA's testimony may be viewed at [www.noca.org](http://www.noca.org).

### **New Regulations to ADA Amendments Act Covered at 2009 NOCA Annual Educational Conference**

New regulations to the ADA Amendments Act are expected to be issued sometime this fall. Watch for the presentations by Shelby Keiser, President, Keiser Consulting LLC, on these new regulations at the [2009 NOCA Annual Educational Conference](#), November 18-21, in Phoenix, Arizona.

### **Standards**

#### **ISO/IEC 17024 Standard Under Revision**

*Jim Kendzel, Executive Director NOCA*

NOCA has been actively involved on a working group for the International Organization for Standardization specifically responsible for reviewing and where appropriate revising the ISO/IEC 17024 Standard, *Conformity Assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons*. This brief article is intended to provide a simple update to the process and what you can expect. One of our members, Cheryl Wild serves on the working group with me and has recently provided an update on the group's activities in her newsletter, *WILD About Testing* (see the [October Issue of WILD about Testing](#) for more details) so I thought I would share with you an excerpt from her article since she has summarized so well where we are in the process:

#### ***What might you expect to see in the new Standard?***

*Although still in the review stage and changes are continuing, you can expect more attention and detail about the test development process, more detail and specifics about a management system, and a rethinking of surveillance requirements. Hopefully, some of the redundancy of different sections of the Standard will be eliminated as well. Once the Standard is revised, based on the comments of the working group members, the revision will be sent to all ISO members for review and comment.*

It is ISO policy to not release drafts at the working group level until the group has completed its work. Once we have completed a draft that is ready for public review we will be posting the draft on the NOCA website in order to provide NOCA members the opportunity to comment on the proposed revisions. If you have any suggestions for improvement of the standard please do not hesitate to contact me and I will relay your suggestions to the working group.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the NOCA Board for supporting my involvement on the working group. It is critical for NOCA to be involved in these types of activities and it also is a tremendous experience for me to work with credentialing experts from around the world and share our different perspectives.

## **Member News**

### **NOCA Welcomes the Following New Members**

- **National Board of Medical Examiners** is located in Philadelphia, PA and can be reached at (215) 590-9500 or via email at [norr@nbme.org](mailto:norr@nbme.org). Visit them on the web at [www.nbme.org](http://www.nbme.org).
- **Licensing Executive Society** is located in Alexandria, VA and can be reached at (703) 836-3106 or via email at [vhancock@lcs.org](mailto:vhancock@lcs.org). Visit them on the web at [www.lesusacanada.org](http://www.lesusacanada.org).
- **International Board of Standards LLC** is located in Metairie, LA and can be reached at (504) 495-1748 or via email at [info@gmentz.com](mailto:info@gmentz.com).
- **FOCUS Accreditation** is located in Belleville, ON and can be reached at (647) 222-1030 or via email at [jennifer@focusaccreditation.ca](mailto:jennifer@focusaccreditation.ca). Visit them on the web at [www.focusaccreditation.ca](http://www.focusaccreditation.ca).
- **American Osteopathic Association** is located in Chicago, IL and can be reached at (312) 202-8051 or via email at [dburkhart@osteopathic.org](mailto:dburkhart@osteopathic.org). Visit them on the web at [www.osteopathic.org](http://www.osteopathic.org).
- **National Inspection Testing Corporation** is located in Los Angeles, CA and can be reached at (877) 457-6482 or via email at [kathym@nationalitc.com](mailto:kathym@nationalitc.com). Visit them on the web at [www.nationalitc.com](http://www.nationalitc.com).
- **American College of Chest Physicians** is located in Northbrook, IL and can be reached at (847) 498-8347 or via email at [mberg@chestnet.org](mailto:mberg@chestnet.org). Visit them on the web at [www.chestnet.org](http://www.chestnet.org).
- **International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium** is located in Harrisburg, PA and can be reached at (717) 540-4457 or via email at [alissa@icrcaoda.org](mailto:alissa@icrcaoda.org). Visit them on the web at <http://icrcaoda.org>.
- **American Society of Agronomy** is located in Madison, WI and can be reached at (608) 268-4977 or via email at [ismith@agronomy.org](mailto:ismith@agronomy.org). Visit them on the web at [www.agronomy.org](http://www.agronomy.org).
- **American Snowsports Education Association** is located in Denver, CO and can be reached at (720) 963-4831 or via email at [broberts@thesnowpros.org](mailto:broberts@thesnowpros.org). Visit them on the web at [www.thesnowpros.org](http://www.thesnowpros.org).
- **Association of Clinical Research Professionals** is located in Alexandria, VA and can be reached at (703) 254-8103 or via email at [carol@acrpnnet.org](mailto:carol@acrpnnet.org). Visit them on the web at [www.acrpnnet.org](http://www.acrpnnet.org).
- **Trish Mendoza** is located in Tampa, FL and can be reached at (800) 242-7405 or via email at [tmendoza@bicsi.org](mailto:tmendoza@bicsi.org).
- **International Coach Federation** is located in Lexington, KY and can be reached at (859) 219-3580 or via email at [george.rogers@coachfederation.org](mailto:george.rogers@coachfederation.org).
- **Lance J Welter** is located in Glenview, IL and can be reached at (847) 998-0113 or via email at [lance.welter@comcast.net](mailto:lance.welter@comcast.net).
- **Meenakshi Gupta** is located in Ottawa, ON and can be reached at (615) 257-8551 or via email at [m.gupta@ictc-ctic.ca](mailto:m.gupta@ictc-ctic.ca).
- **Body Intensity Personal Training** is located in Havertown, PA and can be reached at (484) 614-2295 or via email at [info@bodyintensity.com](mailto:info@bodyintensity.com). Visit them on the web at [www.bodyintensity.com](http://www.bodyintensity.com).

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Industry Events**

Certification Network Group Quarterly Meeting  
December 15, 2009  
Washington, DC  
[cng.communicators.com](http://cng.communicators.com)

NOCA and the Association Forum Certification SIG Host Meeting in Chicago on Benchmarking Studies in Certification - Wednesday, December 16, 2009 from 8:30 am - 10:30 am (CST) - The presenters will discuss benchmarking studies and describe their usefulness to certification organizations and improving certification practices. RSVP to [Jim Kendzel](#). Please include your name, title, organization and email address in your RSVP.