

February 9, 2016

Dear Colleagues and AAIDD members:

Greetings to you as we settle into this new calendar year of 2016. I want to share some of the major activities that your AAIDD board of directors have been engaged in to keep the Association on course in meeting its goals and tell you about some exciting initiatives.

Board Activities 2015-16

In August 2015 the AAIDD board began a year-long study of leadership both within and around AAIDD. We started this journey with the book, *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards* by Chair, Ryan, and Taylor and spent time in discussion of (a) fiscal activities to improve understanding of our fiduciary function as a board and (b) procedural or process activities that impact our member's participation in AAIDD. The Association continues to enjoy an excellent financial position, thanks to the leadership of our Executive Director and CEO, Maggie Nygren, who has instituted thoughtful but rigorous accounting practices ensuring continued success.

Several committees are at work to (a) collaborate with The Arc of the US on several important position statements; (b) select a new editor to succeed Glenn Fujiura on our *Intellectual and Developmental Disability* journal, and (c) collaborate with other national and international partners on important positions. In addition, the Association continues to meet the needs of professionals who work for and with individuals with IDD through its publications and educational programs

In order to address procedures and participation in AAIDD, we developed a survey with results described subsequently. This survey was our first step to study member involvement in the Association. Thank you to those who responded to the membership survey link we sent out in the fall. We received some interesting and confirming information from this online survey, however, as only 11 % of the membership responded, we realize that the following information is not completely representative of AAIDD membership, but nonetheless it is still useful.

- *What do people value most about AAIDD membership?* Survey respondents rated access to AAIDD publications including journals (65.57%), staying current with best practices in the intellectual disability field (63.37%), and networking with colleagues (49.5%) as being of value through their AAIDD membership.

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- *Why did people become AAIDD members?* The top reason respondents became an AAIDD member was that they were looking for a professional organization that focused on IDD (83.58%); however access to AAIDD journals was an important reason for many others (49.64%). Just over a third of respondents (34.34%) reported that a mentor suggested that they join. Was this one of your reasons to become part of AAIDD? If so, you can support the field by promoting AAIDD membership with valued colleagues, associates, and students to encourage them to join and become active in the Association.
- *What are the important roles for AAIDD?* Respondents endorsed the notion that AAIDD has a role to play in promoting social justice, collaborating with other disability organizations, training the next generation of leaders, fostering federal funding of disability research, and developing tools and instruments to improve practice in the IDD field. The top response (in that the largest percentage of people agreed [53.85%] with the statement) was that AAIDD “should do more to train the next generation of leaders in the IDD field.” Interestingly, AAIDD has a training initiative under development which will be rolled out later this year.

The results of this survey confirm some of what we already know about AAIDD and our diverse multi-disciplinary membership. People who responded had been members ranging from a few months to over 46 years and live primarily in the United States, but also in countries beyond the US borders. Most notably, respondents were primarily *over the age of 50* (67.51%). We value all members, but the response to this survey underscores the importance of recruiting and supporting younger people to join the Association.

The board will continue to review the governance and activities within AAIDD to encourage growth, development, and increase connections within and beyond AAIDD. I encourage all members to share their ideas and to volunteer in the initiatives of the Association.

Our 140th Annual Meeting

The 140th conference of the Association will be held in Atlanta, Georgia June 6-9, 2016. Bill Gaventa, President-elect of the Board of Directors, is the chair of the planning committee, and together with the local arrangements committee, hopes you will attend to increase your knowledge, network with others in your chosen field of practice, enjoy the activities, and simply return to your jobs refreshed. Registration will open in early March!

National Goals

AAIDD joined with other leaders in the disability field to host an important meeting to create a platform of national goals for the next 10 years in the areas of aging, education, employment, families, health and wellness, justice, long term supports and services, self-determination and self-advocacy, social inclusion, and workforce for people with IDD. Kudos to our own Past-president of the Board, Amy Hewitt, for her guidance and leadership of this historic collaboration of professionals, self-advocates, and government agencies. The meeting was jointly organized by the Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community

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Integration, University of Minnesota; Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Developmental Disabilities and Health, Institute on Disability and Human Development University of Illinois Chicago; Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Advancing Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston; The Arc of the United States; Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD); and the AAIDD, with the support of National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR).

A number of materials were developed, including a series of issue briefs, video discussions by both professionals and self-advocates on the focus areas (produced by the University of Minnesota's RTC on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration); and a special issue of the AAIDD journal *Inclusion*, that features articles that identify research goals by focus area and explains their importance. Next month we'll see the release of an important book, *Critical Issues in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Contemporary Research, Practice, and Policy*, that provides a concise review of what we know, from both research and practice, about IDD and what the knowledge means for future developments in public policy, research, and practice. The link for these materials is <https://aaid.org/news-policy/policy/national-goals-2015>.

In conclusion, during 2016 we hope to continue to work together through AAIDD for the benefit of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I again encourage each of you to get involved in some aspect of the Association, especially sharing information with colleagues who may not yet be members of AAIDD.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Palmer".

Susan Palmer, PhD, FAAIDD, President of the Board of Directors-AAIDD, 2015-2016

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