

February 13, 2018

Dear AAIDD colleagues and friends,

I hope the new year finds you well. I have just returned from our AAIDD board winter retreat and thought it was a good time to share with members what our organization is doing to achieve its mission of "promoting progressive policies, sound research, effective practices, and universal human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities".

AAIDD offers incredible opportunities for members to learn, collaborate, and effect change. Our recently rebranded Interest Networks (formerly, SIGs, Action Groups, or Divisions) are vibrant communities where members can share interest and work toward common goals. I encourage every member to get involved and find their professional home within an Interest Network. These communities offer members many opportunities to contribute and to make their membership more meaningful. At our 2017 annual meeting, we hosted an Idea Board where attendees could share their thoughts and give feedback. The following word cloud reflects the value of AAIDD to our members. The words that stand out most to me from this collection of idea board sentiments are *meeting*, *people*, and *welcoming*. These words capture what I love about the AAIDD community.



Disturbed and saddened by the violence and hate speech across our country, the AAIDD board of directors reaffirmed our commitment to inclusion and civil rights in a [statement](#) issued in September 2017. We believe that our advocacy for full human rights and increased recognition of the contributions of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to our communities must go hand-in-hand with honoring the same rights and contributions of diverse people of all racial and cultural backgrounds. There cannot be one without the other, for people with

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intellectual and developmental disabilities are represented in every racial, cultural, ethnic, and religious group in our country and around the world.

The 2018 annual conference will have a strong program. President-elect Liz Perkins has planned an exciting conference program that will allow us to continue this conversation. She has put together an excellent program with the theme, *Reaffirming Diversity and Inclusion*. The conference will be held June 25-28, 2018 in St. Louis, Missouri. Please mark your calendars and contribute to this important conversation!

As an organization, we are so fortunate to have a remarkable Executive Director and staff that has the vision and capacity to keep AAIDD moving forward and evolving in ways that ensure we are living our mission. Our financial health is good and we continue to look for ways to diversify revenue that are value added to the field. I am excited about the future of AAIDD and thrilled to be a part of its leadership. You will see a few new and exciting contributions to the field in the coming year. We have a new standardized measure of adaptive behavior coming out that will assess adaptive behavior according to conceptual, practical, and social skills. The Diagnostic Adaptive Behavior Scale (DABS) was designed to be robust and most accurate at the decision point of making a diagnosis of intellectual disability. This tool is much needed in the field and will provide a new adaptive behavior assessment with an on-line interface for scoring. I am confident that this new product will not only be extremely useful in the field but will also add to the sustainability AAIDD. Our members make the development of these new tools and products possible.

AAIDD is strong, but it is only as strong as its members. You generate the ideas, input and enthusiasm for this organization and we need more people like you to become members. I encourage you to get involved in a professional interest group or state/regional chapter; these groups provide ongoing professional networking opportunities with people who are passionate about improving the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through effective policies, practices, and research. You can learn more about these groups by going to the AAIDD website at www.aaid.org.

I am humbled and appreciative of the opportunity to be a part of this organization. It has a remarkable history and a strong future ahead. I hope that you will reach out to me if you have any questions or want to share your ideas and thoughts. Please feel free to contact me should you have any suggestions on ways to further advance the mission that drives our collective efforts.

Warm Regards,



Susan M. Havercamp, PhD, FAAIDD
President, AAIDD Board of Directors, 2017-2018

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