

A Look Back and a Look Forward--The Section for Education

Which APTA Section agreed that \$2 in dues "would probably be enough" to meet its "essential expenses?"

If you guessed the oldest one in APTA--the Section for Education --you're right. Organizing for/then-called the School Section began in 1946; its Rules of Government were adopted in 1949.

The early years of the Section came in the wake of World War II and during the worldwide polio epidemic. The 1947-1948 Annual Report published in The Physical Therapy Review noted the Section's growing significance: "The School Section is gaining a more important place in the American Physical Therapy Association's general program. A full day of the 1948 Conference time will be devoted to meetings of this Section. A program wide in scope but of specific interest to participants... has been planned, and time also will be allowed for discussions as regards further developments of the School Section."

The purpose of the School Section, in part, was "to consider, discuss, and recommend standards relative to admission, curriculum, teaching practices, clinical training, and administration for schools of physical therapy approved by the Council of Medical Education and hospitals of the American Medical Association." Membership was open to active APTA members who were directors of professional education, instructors, or clinical training supervisors in the approved schools of physical therapy. Affiliate members were APTA members who "by virtue of their position or office are interested in furthering the purposes of the School Section and whose qualifications for affiliate membership have been approved by the Section officers."

In 1956, the Rules of Government were amended to change the Section's name to the Section for Education. At the same time, the purpose was modified: "To promote the professional growth and development of the members by providing opportunities to investigate, interpret, evaluate, and exchange ideas on educational philosophies, trends, and practices."

Currently, there are 1,218 members of the Section for Education. Because the Section's members have varied educational interests, four Special Interest Groups (SIGs) have been established. They have their own governance, activities, and annual program; the SIGs are supported in part by funds from the Section for Education. The four SIGs are the Academic Administrators Special Interest Group, the Academic Faculty Special Interest Group, the Clinical Education Special Interest Group, and the Physical Therapist Assistant Educators Special Interest Group. Although these elements enhance the Section's overall purpose, they do not preclude the combined membership from working toward common goals.

Mike Emery, EdD, PT, President of the Section for Education, said "The Section's current priorities include addressing faculty shortage problems, including both recruitment and retention, focusing on the physical therapy workforce shortage, working on national networking for clinical education, exploring curricular activities such as doctoral-level professional education, and clarifying the physical therapist/physical therapist assistant relationship through education."

To address faculty shortage problems, the Section will sponsor a doctoral scholarship, discuss faculty retention efforts through the Academic Administrators Special Interest Group, plan programming at APTA Annual Conference that is aimed at prospective faculty, and establish a Physical Therapy Endowment Fund to support faculty development initiatives.

Emery said that the demand for physical therapy services has increased the demand for greater numbers of physical therapy graduates. This in turn has fueled a proliferation of new physical therapist and physical therapist assistant schools and a demand for larger class sizes.

In an effort to cope with the situation, the Section for Education will develop a consultant pool for new programs, explore strategies and support available for increasing program size, and participate in a survey of national graduates.

With regard to national networking for clinical education, Emery said the Section is planning a national task force and promotion of regional clinical education consortia. Forums on curricular topics at APTA's Annual Conferences will be the vehicle for Section activities related to exploration of curricular alternatives (eg, doctoral-level professional education).

A national meeting of academic administrators of PT and PTA programs, APTA's Board of Directors; and selected Association staff will be held to explore ways to clarify PT/PTA role relationships through education. Documents will be developed that may guide PT/PTA roles in relation to evaluative criteria used in accreditation of each type of education program.

In addition to work on current priorities, the Section for Education's activities regularly include providing programming both at Combined Sections Meetings and APTA Annual Conferences;; sponsoring annual pre-conference workshops at CSM; publishing the Journal of Physical Therapy Education; publishing the Section for Education Bulletin; representing the membership on educational issues related to various APTA components, task forces, and to the APTA Board of Directors; conducting national conferences on educational issues on physical therapy; and supporting the SIGs.

Emery told PT that future issues and initiatives for the Section "include expanding funding for faculty training and development, developing programming and resources for the consultant pool for

new programs, planning activities for the Section's 50th anniversary in 1996, continuing development of the Physical Therapy Endowment Fund, and continuing excellent programming at national conferences that will support the issues outlined above."

The Section's past accomplishments are impressive, and its future course is ambitious. With the support of its current members and new participants, the Section for Education will move forward to help meet physical therapy needs now and well beyond its 50th anniversary.

-- Paulette Dininny