

Silos Are Great for Storing Corn, But....

By Lisa Hunter

Silos are great for storing corn, but not so much as repositories of knowledge. Knowledge is of little use if not shared, and in a field as rapidly changing as audiology, we must find new ways to break down the proverbial silos that exist between science, education, and clinical practice, so that research findings can be put to the test by clinicians and so that clinicians can in turn inform researchers and educators about what really works in practice.

This way of thinking—science to practice, and practice back to science, is necessary to enrich and develop any profession that genuinely strives to be at the cutting edge. The Academy has taken a big leap toward silo smashing by bringing together the "A4." These four groups are the:

- Accreditation Commission for Audiology Education (ACAE),
- Student Academy of Audiology (SAA),
- American Board of Audiology (ABA), and
- American Academy of Audiology Foundation (AAAF).

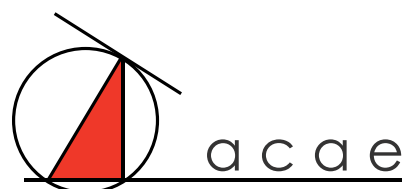
Depicted in a circular relationship collaborating with the board of directors (BOD), these groups can be thought of in terms of their

relationship to the larger world of audiology. ACAE accredits programs that develop the best and brightest—students who choose to join SAA. These students are our future—the next generation of audiologists who can bring new levels of exemplary practice to our profession and become board certified through ABA. As professionals in the field, we hope they will be inspired to give back via the Foundation (AAAF) and possibly provide input to or even become leaders themselves on the BOD. In giving back dollars, volunteer efforts, and providing precepting, helps to fund education, training, and research within programs. Thus the cycle completes and continues to enrich the profession through active engagement in the future of audiology.

A recent article in *Gallup Business Journal Online*, titled "Transformational Change in Higher Education: Tearing Down Silos and Building a Brand at Nova Southeastern University," by Barbara Packer-Muti and Robert Lockwood (2012), describes how the silos that helped to build Nova Southeastern University (NSU), using the Harvard model of "every tub on its own bottom," were initially successful, according to NSU President Ray Ferrero Jr., JD. However, this model of performance-based budgeting system that directs funding to the best-performing schools and colleges

within the university can create academic silos and competition rather than cooperation. So NSU set out to find out how all stakeholders—from students, to faculty, to alumni, both on and off campus—perceived NSU's current reputation and future needs. The main point was to actively engage all stakeholders in helping to chart the university's future. This process, known in business as HumanSigma, is a methodology that enables organizations to assess, manage, and improve the employee-customer relationship. The same process can be employed in any organization, to seek and effectively use the collective intelligence and ideas of those with a stake in the outcome.

ACAE is in the process of updating standards for audiology accreditation, and as part of this process, we are launching a survey of stakeholders. Who are stakeholders? If you are reading this article, YOU are a stakeholder and we want to hear from you! Stakeholders include students, teaching faculty and researchers, clinicians, preceptors, consumers, and industry—anyone who has a stake in hearing health care.



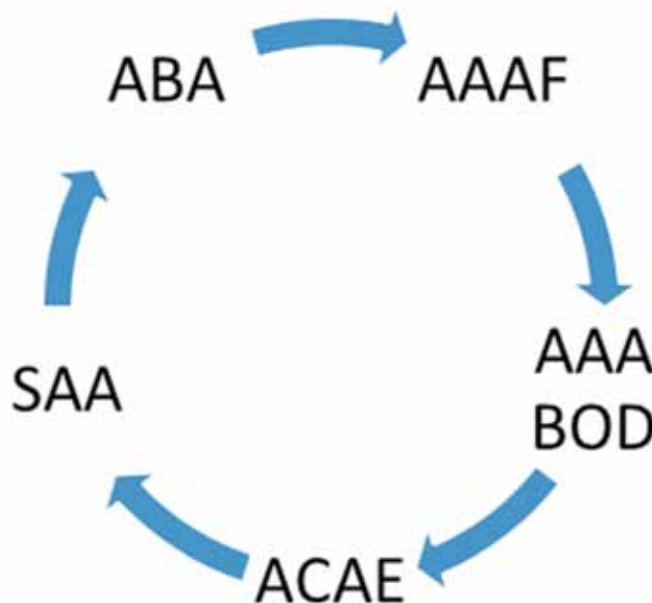
All of us have a vested interest in, and will benefit from, continuous improvements in program standards. Students obviously benefit, and have much invested in tuition and expenses, as well as years of study and practice. To compete for the best positions, students need to be educated and trained to the full breadth of practice, and to a sufficient depth to ensure they graduate with independent skills. Clinicians and preceptors benefit by having a pool of highly qualified trainees who arrive with a solid didactic education to build on, and on whom they can depend in their practice as future employees and colleagues. Faculty and researchers benefit from

program improvement in order to compete successfully for peer respect, research, and training funding, space, and equipment. Additionally, as programs improve in quality and in reputation, they are able to attract more qualified students. Industry benefits from higher professional standards since a cadre of highly educated practitioners is better able to capitalize on advanced technology and get below the surface of technology to truly meet not only the technical side of patient needs but also the human aspects—ultimately, to engage their patients in managing their total hearing health-care needs.

To accomplish all of the above points, we enthusiastically invite

you—the reader and stakeholder—to respond to the ACAE stakeholder survey that will be sent to hearing health constituencies this fall. Your participation will be extremely important to ACAE as it revises its new standards, and to the profession, as it strives to enhance its reputation as a leading health-care provider proponent in the United States and globally.

We hope that you will commit to the future of our profession by recognizing your role in strengthening our educational programs. It is incumbent on all of us to thrive in this competitive health-care environment. Like a good partnership, we need to stand together, not huddle down in silos, in support of our educational programs and profession. 🗣️



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Donations to ACAE may be made at www.acaeccred.org.

Reference

Packer-Muti B, Lockwood R. (2012) Transformational Change in Higher Education: Tearing Down Silos and Building a Brand at Nova Southeastern University. *Gallup Business Journal Online*. <http://businessjournal.gallup.com/content/107596/transformational-change-higher-education.aspx#1> (accessed July 25, 2012).