

# Academy Board of Directors Appoints Political Action Committee (PAC) Advisory Board

During the July Academy Board of Directors Meeting, the Board approved the nominations of the following members to serve on the newly established American Academy of Audiology Political Action Committee (PAC) Advisory Board:

Tomi Browne (Chair)

Brian Fligor

Karen Jacobs

Howard Mango,

Kadyn Williams

Jim Wise

Gail Whitelaw, Chair of Government Relations

Laura Fleming Doyle, Executive Director/ Treasurer of the PAC

Marshall Matz, Esq., Legislative Counsel

Jodi Chappell, Director of Health Care Policy

Political Action Committees are special entities that are established for the purpose of collecting voluntary contributions from a large number of people and aggregating those contributions into a giant pool. Monies collected are then donated to Federal candidates who are supported by the Academy. The purpose of the American Academy of Audiology PAC is to:

• support policy goals important to audiologists and the practice of

audiology through the support of candidates for elective office; • promote better understanding among elected officials of the unique and important role of audiology in the delivery of high quality health care to patients; and

• assist audiologists and others in organizing themselves for effective political action.

To achieve these objectives, the Academy PAC is dependent on the personal contributions of funds from Academy members. A PAC contribution is an investment in your future. We need all our 9,000 members of the Academy to give something. Just imagine how much more access we would have to Congress if we could raise an average of just \$20 per member (naturally, if you are able to give more, please do so.) \$176,000 in our PAC would be a very significant increase and would allow us to have greater impact on Members of Congress.<sup>1</sup>

□ In 15 short years, this Academy has become the home and the voice of audiology □ states Richard Gans, President of the Academy. □ Through political awareness and participation in the process, we will succeed in the journey □ 

<sup>1</sup> The American Academy of Audiology PAC is a bipartisan political action committee operated by and in accordance to guidelines established by the Federal Election Commission. This political action committee is for members of the Academy to join together and contribute voluntary funds collected from Academy members to support candidates for federal political office in accordance with federal election law. The information included in this communication related to the PAC is for Academy members ONLY and is being provided for informational purposes, and is not a solicitation by, or an invitation to contribute to the American Academy of Audiology PAC.

## ACADEMY RESOLUTIONS

J U L Y 2 0 0 4

### Distance-Learning Options for Audiologists

It is the position of the American Academy of Audiology that obtaining the Doctor of Audiology (AuD) degree through distance learning mechanisms is appropriate for a transitional period for experienced practitioners who wish to upgrade their credentials to evolving standards. However, the practice of initiating first-professional training in a Master's degree program with the intent of completing AuD and licensing requirements through a second institution's distance learning mechanism is inappropriate and potentially harmful to the profession and the persons served by audiologists. Accreditation bodies and licensing boards should be vigilant about restricting this practice.

#### RATIONALE

The transition from the Master's degree to the AuD degree as the "first-professional degree" in audiology is rooted in the conviction that the educational models adopted approximately 40 years ago are inadequate to support the needs of individuals served by audiologists. Licensed audiologists and other health care professions that are transitioning to doctoral credentials have been able to take advantage of distance learning programs that enable practitioners to upgrade their professional credentials while continuing to practice. This is an excellent mechanism for experienced professionals and should be encouraged for such individuals.

However, the practice of completing residential training under an obsolete educational model and then pursuing an AuD degree through distance learning for inexperienced entry-level personnel threatens the integrity of the emerging AuD credential. The award of an AuD credential to someone lacking critical elements of either the academic preparation or clinical experience will undermine the evolution of the profession of Audiology to autonomy 

### Three- versus Four-year AuD Educational Programs

It is the position of the American Academy of Audiology that the Doctor of Audiology (AuD) degree awarded by educational institutions should conform to the descriptions of clinical "first professional degrees" published by the United States Department of Education (<http://www.ed.gov>). Educational programs for the AuD degree that are not consistent with this definition should not receive accreditation.

#### RATIONALE

The transition from the Master's degree to the AuD degree as the "first-professional degree" in audiology is rooted in the conviction that the educational models adopted approximately 40 years ago are inadequate to support the needs of individuals served by audiologists. The United States Department of Education describes first-professional degrees in clinical fields of Dentistry, Medicine, Optometry, Osteopathy, Pharmacy, and Podiatry as requiring 4 years of study following undergraduate preparation.

The four-year design is not arbitrary, but was put into place on the basis of the collective experience of the health care professions that are held in high esteem. The vast majority of residential programs leading to the AuD degree require four years of study after completion of a baccalaureate degree. The recent emergence of AuD programs that require only three years of post-baccalaureate education and clinical training is likely to create confusion among prospective students, licensing boards, and the public. The consequences of the departure of the three-year programs from the United States Department of Education descriptions of first professional degrees represent a significant threat to the progress that the profession of Audiology is making to achieve autonomy from other healthcare professions. 