REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Background: The Standing Committee on Communication and Technology met on Tuesday, July 21, 2020 via video conference. The following Commissioners serving on the Standing Committee participated in the discussion: Dr. Bradford Johnson (chair), Dr. Joel Berg, Dr. Christopher Hasty, Dr. Barbara Krieg-Menning, Dr. Sanjay Mallya, and Ms. Deanna Stentiford. Dr. Adolphus Jackson and Ms. Ambika Srivastava were unable to attend. In addition, Dr. Jeffery Hicks, vice chair, Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), attended, and Dr. Arthur C. Jee, chair, CODA, attended a portion of the meeting. Dr. Sherin Tooks, director, CODA, and Mr. Gregg Marquardt, Ms. Michelle Smith, and Ms. Peggy Soeldner, managers, CODA, were also in attendance. The Committee began its meeting with a review of the Committee’s charge. The Committee discussed the following items:

Commission Directives to the Committee: The Standing Committee reviewed ongoing directives related to communication and technology, noting the progress made on various ongoing initiatives (Appendix 1). Key topics related to ongoing communication and technology initiatives are highlighted below.

Communication and Technology Committee Recommendation: This report is informational in nature, no action is required.

Monitoring Utilization of the Newsletter and Website: In accordance with the Commission’s directive, CODA staff continue to monitor usage of the Commission’s newsletter and website to identify areas where communication and functionality could be enhanced. The Committee noted the Accreditation Updates webpage has had a 1,700% increase in page views since March 2020, related to COVID-19 announcements. This reflects that the page is viewed as a very good resource to the Commission’s Community of Interest. The Committee also noted clicks and views of other top pages on the CODA website, all of which have risen this year, especially in the second half of this quarter. Bounce rates have dropped by about 3% from prior year.

The Find a Program page continues to be the most popular webpage, far exceeding any other page on the CODA website. The second most-visited is the Accreditation Updates page, which currently contains all COVID-19 update information. This data corroborates with the page view data above.

CODA Alerts are performing as expected, with an average 54% Open rate and an average 29% Click-through rate on the communications that specifically dealt with COVID-19 information.

Communication and Technology Committee Recommendation: This report is informational in nature, no action is required.

Electronic Accreditation System: The Committee learned that CODA staff and the ADA’s Enterprise Solutions team continue to develop an electronic accreditation system for the use of CODA staff, volunteers and programs.

The teams have created and implemented a back-end database related to Phase I, which replaced the former internal database. The teams are now moving into Phase II, building an electronic
accreditation platform to serve as an external web-based portal. Programs will use this portal to submit reports, self-studies, applications, and such, and site visitors will use the portal to review and submit materials online. The Committee discussed what electronic accreditation tools other accreditors are using, and noted that the Commission and ADA Enterprise Solutions team have chosen to create a system from scratch.

IT and CODA staff have begun training sessions to start building documents and information into the system. There will be a revised project schedule, and CODA staff hopes to proceed with this project through 2020. CODA staff and volunteers will begin testing the web-based system once sufficient infrastructure is in place to do so, and the goal is to present a live demo to the Commission when the system is ready.

**Communication and Technology Committee Recommendation:** This report is informational in nature, no action is required.

**2019-2023 Communication Plan:** The Standing Committee reviewed updates on various execution aspects of the 2019-2023 Communication Plan *(Appendix 2).* To date:

- **Mandatory Annual Site Visitor Training:** CODA launched mandatory annual site visitor training in 2019. Staff initially intended to use an electronic Learning Management System tool but have since decided to use its existing Qualtrics system for the time being.

- **CODA Virtual Meetings Since the Coronavirus Pandemic:**
  - 39 Review Committee meetings;
  - Three CODA meetings;
  - Five webinars (with a grand total of 1,200 attendees);
  - Three public Hearings on Standards (with a grand total of more than 600 attendees);
  - 32 announcements and guidance documents issued;
  - Two days of site visitor training workshop

- **Online Submission Process for Comments on Proposed Revisions to Accreditation Standards:** Staff is building a method by which Communities of Interest will submit comments online via the CODA website, during the period of circulation of proposed revisions to CODA’s Accreditation Standards. The Committee acknowledged that electronic comment tools are becoming a common trend. Further, the collection of comments via an online comment portal provides more consistency in the comment collection process versus collection by email or U.S. Mail. The Committee suggested that staff further develop and implement the electronic comment system. Additionally, the Commission could consider the methods by which CODA Hearings on Standards are conducted, given the online comment opportunity and the changing methods by which meetings may occur in the future. For instance: CODA may elect to continue to conduct hearings at the ADA and ADEA meetings annually; CODA may elect to conduct virtual hearings on its own prescribed schedule; or CODA may elect to discontinue hearings in lieu of the online comment submission process that enables comments to be received at any time during a period of public distribution of proposed revisions to the CODA Standards. Following discussion, the Committee endorsed moving forward with this electronic comment tool.
**Communication and Technology Committee Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Commission on Dental Accreditation direct implementation of a web-based submission process to collect public comments on proposed revisions to Accreditation Standards during a period of public comment, to be implemented upon final development and sufficient testing of the tool.

**Technology Assessment and Strategy:** The Committee noted that the IT team is working with CODA staff to set up a new telephone system for CODA’s Chicago office, which will enable staff to make/receive calls via computer. The Committee also noted that IT is establishing a CODA toll-free telephone number.

**Communication and Technology Committee Recommendation:** This report is informational in nature, no action is required.

**Annual Report to the Communities of Interest:** The Committee reviewed the 2019 CODA Annual Report in order to discuss potential enhancements for the upcoming year, noting the publication date of the initial edition was December of last year. It also noted the report reflects a summary of the year in which it is published; for example, the 2020 report will reflect 2020 information. For 2020, the Committee suggests adding a specific section related to the impact of COVID-19, to include: the Commission’s work in addressing interruption of education, the changes in CODA business methods and operations, the flexibility guidance provided by CODA, and future considerations addressed by the Commission. Following discussion, the Committee suggests that the Commission consider what type of information should be provided in this year’s annual report, given the COVID-19 impact on dental education.

**Communication and Technology Committee Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Commission on Dental Accreditation direct the addition of a specific section to the 2020 CODA Annual Report discussing Commission actions related to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Prepared by: Mr. Gregg Marquardt
Review of Progress on Ongoing Commission on Dental Accreditation Directives or Actions Related to the Standing Committee on Communication and Technology (Summer 2020)

Commission directives noted in black, CODA progress made noted in red.

Summer 2015, Summer 2016 and Summer 2017 (ongoing directive):

Commission Action: Directing CODA staff to continue to monitor utilization of the newsletter and website to identify areas where communication and functionality could be enhanced.

- Staff reviews website utilization statistics regularly. Website statistics reviewed include page views, new visitors, bounce rate, and other data. Staff has completed a transition to Google Analytics, and charts of website performance data are available in TAB 2A. On an ongoing basis, staff also reviews performance analytics for each CODA Alert email. A chart of the performance of CODA Alerts is available in TAB 2A as well.

Summer 2015:

Commission Action: Directing investigation of electronic accreditation business tools available and utilized by other professional accreditation organizations.

Directing development and deployment of a survey of dental and dental related education programs to investigate the electronic accreditation tools used in academic settings and additionally the important aspects educational programs would like to see in an electronic accreditation platform used by the Commission.

- CODA staff and the ADA’s Enterprise Solutions team continue to develop an electronic accreditation system for the use of CODA staff, volunteers and programs. The system is based on an instance of Aptify built specifically for CODA. Development and user acceptance testing of the database replacement component of the electronic accreditation tool occurred from 2018 Q3 through 2019 Q2. The replacement of the former CODA DSA database occurred in August 2019.

- Phase II of the Aptify project will be to build and test the external, web-based portal to the system, also called the Online Accreditation Application and Self-Study Processes. This web-based portal will be used by program administrators and CODA volunteers to conduct accreditation and volunteering tasks. In Q4 2019, the Enterprise Solutions team and CODA Staff began planning for the development and testing of Phase II. In early 2020 Staff met with IT to review upload of “surveys” into the system, noting a number of performance items that needed to be addressed in the design of the tool. Staff is awaiting confirmation that these corrections have been made. Staff is creating a revised project schedule, and work on Phase II is expected to proceed during the second half of 2020.
Standing Committee on Communication and Technology  
CODA Summer 2020

Summer 2017:

**Commission Action:** Directing Staff to develop a Communication Plan in regard to 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, for review by CODA in Summer 2018.

- In 2018, staff developed the 2019-2023 Communication Plan, based on data and insights gleaned from the 2017 Communication Follow-Up Survey, and presented the Plan to the Commission for consideration at the Summer 2018 Meeting.
- As directed by that Plan, staff has, to date:
  - Added CODA branding to many of the documents used by Staff
  - Produced four webinars [Note: webinars have been undergoing formatting and server changes, and currently only one webinar is posted to the CODA website]
  - Launched Mandatory Annual Training for Site Visitors in December 2019
  - 2020 Mandatory Annual Training is expected to run in Fall 2020
  - Hosted multiple virtual meetings and webinars via Zoom:
    - 39 Review Committee meetings;
    - Three CODA meetings;
    - Five webinars (with a grand total of 1,200 attendees);
    - Three public Hearings on Standards (with a grand total of more than 600 attendees);
    - 32 announcements and guidance documents issued;
    - Two days of site visitor training workshop
  - Stayed connected with each other via Skype and Zoom
  - Begun the process to add a method by which comments on proposed revisions to Accreditation Standards may be submitted through the CODA website
  - A working copy, with updates, is provided in TAB 2B; the original Plan is also provided to the Committee as a resource document.

**Technology Assessment and Strategy:** At its Summer 2017 meeting, the Committee discussed the Commission’s Goal 1, Objective 4 of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, to look at creating a technology strategy to improve accreditation program efficiency and effectiveness. The technology assessment and strategy may require funding, which could be requested through the Commission’s Research and Development Fund. The strategy could allow CODA to gauge its current and future needs to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the CODA program.

- In 2017 and 2018, Staff conducted a technology audit and drafted the Technology Assessment and Strategy 2019-2023 (available to the Committee as a resource document), which includes the audit results and an assessment of future hardware and software needs of the Commission.
- To date:
  - Staff has purchased earbuds with inline microphones for staff, to enhance sound quality while presenting conference calls and webinars.
In early September 2019, staff re-designed the architecture of the Site Visitor Materials site of ADA Connect. Structure and content were re-organized to improve the user experience.

In October 2019, the CODA staff offices in Chicago were re-designed. The new layout included two new meeting rooms specifically for CODA staff use. In addition to standard internet, wireless and telephone systems, the larger room will also feature a flat-screen display to replace the projector used previously.

As of Q4 2019, staff is increasing the use of Skype for Business, an instant messaging and online conferencing tool, and discontinuing use of ReadyTalk. Staff has also tested the use of webcam meetings within Skype for Business and has plans to conduct more webcam meetings in 2020.

CODA staff has requested a standalone video conferencing tool which looks similar to a smart speaker yet also includes a 360-degree camera atop the device which can recognize and highlight the person speaking. Staff will use the device for webcam meetings which involve multiple attendees in the Chicago office.

The IT team is working with CODA staff to set up a new telephone system for CODA’s Chicago office, which will enable staff to make/receive calls from their laptops.

The working copy of the Technology Needs Assessment is provided in TAB 3.
CODA Communication Plan 2019-2023 [working copy]

Background
At its July 6, 2017 meeting, the Standing Committee on Communication and Technology reviewed a survey data executive summary and the data results from a Communication Survey deployed in Spring 2017 as a follow up to the communication survey deployed in 2012.

The Standing Committee concluded that, based upon the 2017 Communication Survey, the CODA Communication Plan associated with the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan should be developed.

Statement of Purpose
This Plan provides communication execution details which supports specific Objectives of the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) 2017-2021 Strategic Plan. The Standing Committee on Communication and Technology will present this plan to the Commission on Dental Accreditation at the CODA Summer 2018 Meeting.

Communication Environment Analysis
- CODA continues to develop its relationship with its organizational sponsor, the American Dental Association (ADA).
- As such, CODA continues to expand its operational and financial autonomy with its sponsor.
- With this come communication opportunities and logistics challenges for technology currently provided and supported by ADA shared services, including its websites for the public and for CODA volunteers, email processes, and more.
- Studies deployed by Commission staff, such as the 2017 Communication Survey, indicate most audiences (but not all) understand what CODA is and what it does as the USDE-recognized accrediting agency for dental and dental-related education programs.
- While other industries and their audiences have well-developed technological and social media practices, CODA’s audiences have yet to embrace advanced accreditation technology; plus, they indicate a strong preference for standard communication channels such as email and websites.

2017 Communications Survey
In Spring 2017, CODA Staff deployed a survey to its Communities of Interest to determine current attitudes toward CODA communications and preferences for specific communication channels. High-level results indicated:
- CODA’s community of interest continue to prefer email as a communication channel, with websites as a second choice;
- CODA’s community of interest also prefer webinars as a means of gaining information from CODA;
- CODA’s community of interest indicated no strong preference for video or social media tools such as YouTube or LinkedIn, and
- Findings suggest there is an increased level of understanding among the community of interest about the CODA-ADA relationship.

An Executive Summary Report is presented at the end of this Plan. Results data are available in Appendix 4 (1603_StandingCommitteeOnCommTech_Ap4_8-18.pdf).
Primary Communication Channels

- CODA Alert Email
- CODA Website
- On Demand Webinar (posted on Website)
- Presentation (speech + PowerPoint)
- ReadyTalk
- ADA Connect

CODA Personas

Frequent Communications

- Program Director
  - Concerned that their program maintain accreditation
  - Ensuring their programs comply with CODA standards
  - Want to know as much as possible about CODA process & deadlines

- Site Visitor
  - Eager to participate in the accreditation process
  - Doing it right
  - Instruction and training

- Community of Interest Member
  - Have an interest in dental education (faculty) and the profession (practitioners)
  - May be prospective or current students, patients, the public
  - Represent licensing bodies, certifying boards, and national professional membership organizations
  - Issues vary but want to ensure that students/residents are educated to safely and competently practice and serve as a positive representative of the profession.

- Review Committee / Appeal Board / Commission Member
  - Maintaining educational quality and the integrity of the dental profession
  - Carving out the time to review materials
  - Wants reports from site visitors and updates from staff

Other Groups with Whom CODA Communicates

- Constituent Dental Society
- United States Department of Education and other accrediting and state regulatory agencies
- Journalist
- Student / Resident [primarily through the “Find a Program” page on the CODA website]

CODA Goal 1:
The Commission on Dental Accreditation will be a leader in accreditation of dental education programs by recognizing the emerging areas of dental education, practice, research, and trends in higher education.

CODA Objective 5:
Create a comprehensive communication plan to enhance CODA visibility.
CODA Action Items:

- By summer of 2017, CODA will conduct a follow-up survey of the 2012 Communication Survey to its communities of interest to assess its progress toward enhanced communication and report the results to the Commission.
- By winter of 2018, CODA will research methods to reach and communicate information to its varied communities of interest in association with review and revision of its communication plan.
- By summer 2018, CODA will review and revise its communication plan and strategies to address findings of the Communication Survey and identified best practices of communication with its stakeholders.
- Every 3-5 years, or as the need arises, and following development of the communication plan and strategies, survey CODA’s communities of interest to assess its effectiveness in responding to and communicating with stakeholders.

Communication Objective:

- Increase the visibility and transparency of Commission actions

High-Level Communication Deliverables: [gray text indicates completed or ongoing deliverable]

- [Continue late 2018 through 2023:] Use webinar technology to deliver live and on-demand training and informational webinars
- [Begin late 2018, complete by attrition:] Brand All CODA stand-alone materials
- [2019 through 2023:] Use Aptify to communicate with accredited programs
  - Message boards, dashboards and online alerts
- [Begin early- to mid-2019, ongoing:] Use online training software to train CODA volunteers
- [Mid-2019:] Update the design of Communicator
  - Work with the Web Content and Communications Manager to update layout
- [Mid- to late-2019:] Improve use of CODA Alerts
  - Update the branding, layout and content of CODA Alerts
  - Increase the frequency of corrections and updates to mailing lists
- [Mid-2019 through 2020:] Improve usage of CODA Website
  - Re-organize the site architecture based on analytics data
  - Re-design website layout with more imagery [Communicator]
  - 2020: Launch automatic site visit schedules portal

Communication Metrics: [green = positive change; red = negative change]

- Increase year-to-year CODA Alert Click rates:
  - 2018 avg. = 9%  2019 avg.= 18%  2020 avg. to date = 21%
- Improve website user, download, and bounce rates
  - 2020 1st half v 2019 2nd half: unique page views up 16%; downloads up 47%; bounce rate down 3%
- Increase Communicator page visits
  - Waiting for metrics until another issue of the newly-designed Communicator is published

CODA Goal 2:
The Commission on Dental Accreditation will be a leader in the field in accreditation of dental education programs by ensuring long term sustainability in governance and autonomy,
resources, best practices in higher education accreditation, and building relationship, partnerships and collaboration.

CODA Objective 3:
Build and strengthen relationships by enhanced communication with CODA’s communities of interest.

CODA Action Items:
- In accordance with the Communication Plan, develop communication and marketing tools to provide more information about CODA accreditation to CODA’s communities of interest, including its mission, vision, values, plans (including plans to enhance communication) and benefits.
- On a continuing basis, CODA staff will provide workshops and host hearings at national meetings (e.g., ADEA, ADA, other dental meetings) to foster relationships and provide current information about CODA, its mission, the benefit of accreditation and CODA’s activities.
- Annually, CODA will develop and/or update 2-3 webinars and/or reports on contemporary topics and will create and maintain a library that is accessible to CODA’s volunteers, program directors, and communities of interest.

Communication Objective:
- Increase knowledge about CODA among specific audiences

Topics Segmented by Personas and Other Audiences:
- Program Director: Maintaining a program’s accreditation
- Site Visitor: Annual training / Best practices for site visits
- COI: Updating “Advanced Education” Terminology in all CODA materials
- COI: CODA is the sole accreditor of U.S. dental and dental-related programs
- COI: Re-publishing external stories about or which mention the Commission
- COI: General Updates / Editorial and thought leadership articles
- Review Committee/Appeal Board/Commissioner Member: Process and best practices
- Annual CODA Report: deliver to CODA Communities of Interest

High-Level Communication Deliverables
- [Current through 2023:] Include message in as many pieces as possible that CODA is sole accrediting body of all dental and dental-related education programs in the United States
- [Late 2018 through 2023:] Increase development and utilization of training and educational tools (webinars, training modules)
- [Early 2019 through 2023:] Produce & promote live webinar sessions
  - In the first half of 2020, multiple Commission, Hearings, Review Committee, Site Visitor Training and other sessions were conducted virtually
- [2020 through 2023:] Publish & promote editorial/thought leadership articles
Communication Metrics: [green = positive change; red = negative change]

- Number of editorial articles published & webinars posted or held live
  - Meetings & Webinars held virtually in first half of 2020:
    - Almost 40 Review Committee meetings
    - Two Special Sessions of the Commission
    - Five Interruption of Education webinars
    - Three Hearings on Standards webinars
    - Two 2020 Site Visitor Training sessions

- Webinar Page: increase Page Visit rate
  - Track individual video downloads to determine topics of interest
    - 2020 1st half v 2019 2nd half: unique page views up 16%
  - The Accreditation News Page, which CODA Staff has utilized as the centralized location of COVID-19 updates, saw a 1700% increase in Rate of Views between March 16 and June 8, 2020

- Feedback via next Communication Follow-up Survey in 2021
CODA Communication Survey 2017 – Executive Summary Report

Objective
To gauge awareness, effectiveness, and knowledge of CODA communications in order to craft a communications plan that addresses the express needs of all communities of interest, as well as to measure improvement in communication initiatives to those communities.

Methodology
An online survey sent to 2,675 Community of Interest individuals and 10,000 ADA member dentists on 4/10/2017 [In 2012 the survey was sent to 2,800 COI and 5,000 ADA members] The recipients received a reminder on 4/20/2017, ten days into the open survey, and the survey was closed on 5/5/2017, 25 days after launch. The response rate at the time of close was approximately one submission per day.

There were 702 COI respondents (26%) and 359 member dentist respondents (6.3%). [In 2012 there were 1,732 COI respondents (62%) and 509 member dentist respondents (10%)] 156 (43%) member dentists selected ‘not familiar at all’ on the first question and were exempted from all remaining questions except for organization affiliation [In 2012, 115 selected ‘not familiar at all (24%)] Member dentist responses on all other questions were sourced from the remaining 203 individuals. The margin of error was 3% for COI, 7% for member dentists.

Findings
For the most part, member dentists are far less informed and interested in CODA operations. These findings are similar to the results of the 2012 survey. When it comes to participating in CODA events, COI individuals are most interested in webinars, somewhat interested in ADEA annual meetings, and less interested in ADA meetings and open sessions (this also aligns with the 2012 survey findings).

The preferred method of receiving CODA communications is email (93.4% n=656); this preference has not changed from 2012. The preferred method of training is the webinar (50.8% n=357), which also aligns with respondents’ answers in the 2012 survey.

COI respondents showed little interest in social media as a means of CODA communication, with the exception of YouTube, which showed a slightly higher interest as compared to the other social media channels listed in the survey (22.8%, n=160). While this slight increase is not enough to warrant a formal CODA channel on YouTube, it does support the interest respondents have in webinar training and indicates they have a comfort level with obtaining information via online multi-media.

In 2012, respondents showed an interest in Facebook. However, because of the privacy and data security challenges which make Facebook a less viable communication tool for CODA, the social media platform was not offered as a choice in the 2017 survey.

COI individuals consider themselves well informed on CODA activities, which remains similar to the attitude respondents revealed in 2012. Readership of CODA Communicator and Alert emails is quite high, and most respondents feel the Communicator fulfills its objective (71%, n=498).
The primary sources for policy updates and accreditation decisions are the Communicator and the CODA website. The topic of most importance to COI individuals is ‘policy changes;’ in 2012, the topic of most importance was ‘accreditation status.’

Finally, one area that indicated strong improvement from the 2012 survey was respondents’ understanding of the relationship between CODA and the ADA. In the 2017 survey, 83% (n=583) of COI respondents chose the correct description of CODA as a “semi-independent agency of the ADA.” In 2012, 41% (n=709) chose correctly.