

Former AAAC chair Tom Beach receives AIC's highest honour

Former AAAC chair Tom Beach has received the Agricultural Institute of Canada's (AIC) highest honour, "Fellow of the AIC" and was recognized for his achievement at a luncheon held in Ottawa on June 27, 2009.

Fellowships are granted to members of AIC for professional distinction worthy of national recognition.

Over the years, Beach has helped build AIC into a dynamic organization leading the way on articulating Canadian agricultural issues, increasing the credibility of agrology as a profession, and making food security a reality for people of developing nations. In his role as accreditation program coordinator (1997 to 2008) he led the way on a number of accreditation initiatives, like promoting the AAAC online training course to AIC site reviewers, thus improving the quality of AIC's program.

As administrator (and a professional agrologist), Beach provided important leadership in building the AIC program for accrediting agriculture programs at the eight Canadian academic institutions offering undergraduate agriculture degrees. His role as accreditation coordinator began when the program was launched in 1997, and it grew in strength and stature under his administration.

As well, he facilitated an in-depth review of the accreditation program and once again went beyond his role in administration by making valuable suggestions resulting in

important program modifications.

Reaching beyond his prescribed role once more, Beach recently developed and fostered connections with academic institutions in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia to apply AIC's evaluation to their programs to provide an assessment of equivalency with Canadian degree offerings.

In addition to his accomplishments in the field of accreditation, Beach also served twice as the executive director of AIC, from 1999 to 2001 and from 2002 to 2007, during which AIC was undergoing fundamental and difficult changes. Beach played an important role in helping to steer the organization through a difficult membership restructuring and transition to a new form of governance.

As executive director, Beach led the resurrection of the AIC discussion paper in 2005. The first paper produced as a result of this renewal, *Big Farms, Small Farms*, generated much national public discussion on the sustainability of Canadian agriculture as witnessed by more than 100 newspaper articles and 20 radio programs on the subject.

Beach's achievements also extend well beyond the executive director role. He has had a significant impact as the international program coordinator (1996 to present) and accreditation program coordinator.

Beach led the effort in 2000 to

renew Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funding for another five-year period, achieving an increase in funding and keeping the program relevant and viable despite funding cutbacks within CIDA. Proving his resourcefulness, he identified additional funding streams which put AIC in the position of being able to negotiate future contracts worth more and for longer periods.

During this time AIC's international program was cited by CIDA as one of the most effective voluntary sector programs promoting food security. Funding was again renewed in 2006, extending the program to 2011.

Beach's contributions to rural and agricultural development have also been recognized internationally through the awarding of an Honourary Fellowship in the Ghana Society of Animal Production and Honourary Membership in the Soil Science Society of Sri Lanka. The impact of his achievements on the agricultural sector of the developing countries with AIC has been significant and long lasting.

A man of quiet confidence, his admirers many and his achievements large, Beach has made a significant difference to Canadian and world agriculture.

Tom Beach served as vice chair of AAAC in 2006 and as chair in 2007.

The AAAC logo consists of the letters "AAAC" in a bold, serif font. Above the letters is a stylized graphic of a fan or a set of radiating lines, suggesting a sun or a fan of leaves.

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Strategic Plan summary

New mission and mandate developed

In early May 2009, members of AAAC participated in a strategic planning workshop facilitated by Paulette Vinette during which members established a draft three-year strategic plan.

Participant and long-standing member representative, Lorne Riley, Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board executive director, says he was very satisfied with the result of the meeting – the first such workshop to be held since 2007.

"We came to certain conclusions about the direction AAAC should take," he says. "The report we received from Paulette was bang-on. It captured the discussion and summarized the main points."

As a result of the planning session, and after much discussion, the AAAC mission statement was changed and a new vision statement developed. The mission statement now reads: "AAAC serves and supports member accrediting organizations" while the vision statement is: "To be the leading resource for accreditation in Canada."

Though Riley suggests too much time may have been spent discussing the mission and vision statements, "some good points were made. The mission and vision are appropriate for what we are trying to do."

However, he says the session allowed for some "much-needed discussion" on governance, adding that the decision to have two "extra" at-large members added to the executive committee, was a good one. Part of the planning session included members identifying the association's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) which generated lengthy discussions among the participants.

Likewise, members worked together to develop ideas for key activities the association could assume and although only six were agreed upon for the final report "there could have been 66," Riley says. The three most notable activities were conducting surveys, increasing networking and advocating to stakeholders about the role of accreditation. As well, the exercise enabled the AAAC to identify

three strategic priorities for 2009-2012: resource development; communication; and advocacy.

Some strategies discussed for resource development were to develop and disseminate standards and processes for accreditation, best practices, guidelines and training tools, as well as identifying common practices, publish literature reviews, hold or attend more round-table workshops, and review the expansion of AAAC membership to include non-program accreditors.

"We need a communications plan that will ascertain key audiences and what we intend to convey to each audience," Riley says about the association's top priorities.

An ongoing issue for AAAC remains ensuring its mandate is not lost as members renew and new agencies join by ensuring all those involved have a vested interest in program accreditation. Overall the strategic planning workshop was a success. Goals were established, mission and vision statements were chosen, and a three-year strategic plan was drafted.



On the AAAC Listserv

One of the many benefits of AAAC membership is access to the Listserv where information and ideas are exchanged between members on a regular basis. Members often pose questions with the feedback from other associations helping to define their organizational and accreditation processes. This summer several questions were posted on the Listserv that prompted informative replies.

An example is the AAAC member, whose organization had just completed a third site visit, asking fellow accrediting agencies, "Do any of your organizations have oversight by the regulatory bodies you are accrediting on behalf of, and are there observers from the regulatory bodies?"

Answers included: "Yes, the accreditation board [for our organization] does have representation from the regulatory bodies," replied one member, while another wrote, "We have representation from the regulatory bodies on the survey teams for the university-wide reviews. They have voting rights when recommendations are made on the accreditation status to be granted to the programs – we review all the programs accredited at the time of the regular review – this can range from 16 programs at the smallest university to 60-plus programs at the largest university."

A third AAAC member replied, "We have one representative on our bureau of accreditation from all of the regulatory associations. In addition, in one province we have a 'practice setting' clinical reviewer who joins the review team."

Finally, a fourth AAAC member answered, "We do not have oversight by the regulatory bodies regarding accreditation. We do send the appropriate regulatory body a letter letting them know when a program has been accredited in their province."

Networking and information-sharing is of paramount importance to the success of any organization – and the members of AAAC are using both of these tools to their advantage, thus creating a dynamic and vibrant association that helps its members develop and grow.

To learn more about membership, visit www.aaac.ca.

Making a splash on the international scene



The Diver Certification Board of Canada (DCBC), along with other associations working in the area of program accreditation, is

helping promote the already strong Canadian brand of quality and excellence in education.

DCBC first began accrediting programs outside Canada in 2003 when it was approached by, and since accredited, the Divers Institute of Canada in Washington State. The DCBC is also in the process of accrediting a second school in Florida.

Since then, word has been spreading about DCBC's accreditation program. In the past year DCBC has been approached by a school in Durban, South Africa and a school in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, requesting DCBC to accredit their commercial diver training programs. More recently

Egyptian authorities have expressed interest in Canadian standards and the DCBC accreditation process.

The school in Durban heard of the DCBC through a mutual acquaintance in London, England who suggested the school request DCBC accreditation of the school's program. It would be the first accreditation outside of North America for DCBC.

DCBC executive director David Parkes says once an international school applies for accreditation it can take up to six months to become fully accredited, adding that DCBC's main concern in foreign accreditation is quality control.

"In North America the commercial diving fraternity is so cohesive

that even if a school doesn't tell us something, we hear about it," he says. In the international arena this informal source of information is less reliable, therefore formal quality control measures are much more important.

However, Parkes says foreign accreditation is good not only for the DCBC but also for Canada.

"The big thing is that foreign accreditation enhances the knowledge of our certification scheme abroad. That, in turn, makes Canadian divers more employable abroad; it promotes a strong Canadian brand."

To learn more about the DCBC, and accreditation, visit their website at www.divercertification.com.

In memorium: Wendy McBride

It is with much sadness that we inform you that Wendy McBride passed away July 23, 2009, surrounded by her loved ones, after bravely fighting cancer for the last three and a half years. Wendy will be missed by everyone that knew her. Our thoughts and condolences go out to her mother and brother, her husband, Michael Peterson, her children, Senterre, Max, and Becky, her grandchildren, and her many friends.

Wendy was one of the founding members of the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada (AAAC), representing the nursing profession. While directing the accreditation program for Canadian nursing education, Wendy generously shared her enthusiasm and support for the ongoing development of the AAAC. She held the position of secretary on the inaugural AAAC Executive Committee (1995-1996) and co-chaired the executive from 1996-1999. She continued as an active and contributing member of the AAAC until she retired in 2004.

Wendy was executive director of the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) from 1993 to 2004. As executive director of CASN, Wendy represented Canadian academic nursing and research to govern-

ment, funding agencies, other health organizations and foreign governments.

To honour Wendy's many contributions to CASN and nursing education in Canada, CASN has announced the Wendy McBride Award for Accreditation Reviewer Excellence.

This award will be given annually in Wendy's memory to a CASN accreditation program reviewer who made a significant contribution to the accreditation program by providing direction and leadership during an on-site visit and writing of the site visit report, participating in the evaluation and advancement of the accreditation program, and demonstrating appreciation and comprehension of the accreditation program purpose, standards and policies.

For more information or details on the Wendy McBride Award for Accreditation Reviewer Excellence, please contact CASN.

To make a donation in Wendy's memory or lend your support you can visit Angels in Action or Ovarian Cancer Canada, two groups that were close to Wendy's heart.

Reprinting articles

A number of readers have asked permission to reprint *The Accreditation Bulletin* articles in their organizational publications. The reprint policy states "readers may reprint an article as long as AAAC is notified in advance, and credit is given to both the newsletter and the firm of Megram Consulting Services Ltd."

It is also requested that AAAC receives a copy of the issue containing a reprint from *The Accreditation Bulletin*.

INQAAHE's new webpage

This is a reminder of the bulletin sent out on the Listserv earlier this summer that the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) are creating a new webpage located at www.inqaahe.org/main/aspa-news-and-events.com and are asking AAAC members to view it and relay ideas back to the organization of how the webpage could be made useful.

In January 2009 INQAAHE organized a workshop for specialized and professional accreditors. One of the outcomes of the meeting was a special section for specialized accreditors on its website.

For more information or to make suggestions, please contact Carol Bobby, convener of the INQAAHE working group on professional accreditors, at cbobby@cacrep.org.

New November meeting dates

For those planning to attend the November AAAC meeting, please be advised the dates have been changed to Thursday, November 12, 2008 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Friday, November 13, 8:30 a.m. to noon.

Once again, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons has generously offered AAAC its council room for the meeting. The College is located at 774 Promenade Echo Drive, Ottawa.

