

From my perspective

In my opinion, it is very important that our Fellows know about the changes that are occurring in the College's various programs. As a result, I like to use this column to inform you on a regular basis about our progress. Recently I have written about activities related to membership and advocacy issues, and particularly the formation of our political action committee, ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC. This month, I would like to highlight some of the really exciting developments that are taking place in the College's educational programs.

Continuing medical education

The College's ability to grant continuing medical education (CME) credits for the meetings of various surgical societies and our local chapters through a joint sponsorship program has been well received. In our realigned CME Unit, we have attempted to streamline our activities from both an administrative and a financial standpoint. The organizations that are taking advantage of this service have uniformly been pleased with this special service, and they have found the new CME Unit to be responsive and efficient. I would encourage other organizations that are experiencing difficulty with the CME process to contact us at the following e-mail address: kgoldsmith@facs.org.

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) establishes the standards for continuing medical education and evaluates whether organizations that grant CME credits are complying with their mandates. I am pleased to say that we have just been extensively evaluated by the ACCME and have been granted a four-year approval status. This status will allow us to continue to pursue various educational activities that really benefit our Fellows and our affiliated organizations.

It is important to note, and I must emphasize, that in order to receive ACCME approval and CME credits for a program the College is cosponsoring, appropriate paperwork must be completed by both the College and the partner organizations. Such issues as conflicts of interest, goals and objectives of the programs, and educational outcomes must be included in the paperwork that is submitted to the College. It is critically important that we have this documen-



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tation in place, so that we will have the information that will be necessary for future evaluations.

Competency

As you are aware, the entire area of physician competency has recently been reviewed and redefined by accrediting and certifying bodies such as the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education and the American Board of Medical Specialties. Interpersonal and communication skills, systems-based practice, practice-based learning and improvement, and professionalism are now specifically included in the list of competencies required for both surgeons in training and practicing surgeons.

At this time, we are convening work groups to address each of these four important areas. These groups will meet periodically to develop appropriate recommendations and teaching materials to address these competencies. When this work has been completed, new products will be incorporated

into the spectrum of our educational programs to support surgeons in their efforts to remain not only certified, but competent, throughout their professional careers.

Electronic education

Other new products in the Division of Education have already appeared. One of these products is a special Web cast of several sessions from the last October's Clinical Congress, which makes Category 1 CME credit available online. By participating in this educational activity, a surgeon may conveniently obtain inexpensive CME Category 1 credits. I think you will find the sessions useful, and this program will certainly make credit hours easily obtainable.

Other products from the Clinical Congress consist of a CD-ROM that includes materials from 14 postgraduate courses, the usual audiotapes that have been available in the past, and syllabi from various postgraduate courses.

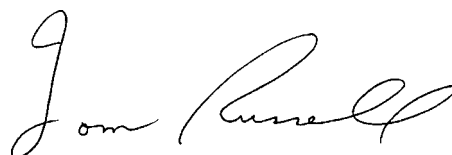
Spring Meeting

Preparations for the Spring Meeting, which will be held April 12-15, 2003, in New York City, are proceeding well. The educational content of this meeting promises to be superb and will offer a wide array of educational opportunities not only for the general surgeon, but for surgeons from other specialties as well. During this meeting, practice-related issues will receive special emphasis. The American Society of General Surgeons has helped in the planning of the opening session of this meeting.

We have concentrated our efforts not only on the broad educational content of the meeting, but also on cost-effectiveness. The Spring Meeting really needs to be a gathering that can flourish as a separate, financially sound, self-sustaining entity. Historically, the Spring Meeting has been a costly event for the College. To offset financial losses this year, we are going to charge a modest registration fee, which really is a prudent fiscal move considering the current economic realities. By means of carefully monitoring all expenses, as well as charging the modest registration fee, we believe we can continue to offer the Spring Meeting to our Fellows, both from general surgery and the other specialties, and ensure its viability as a useful, stand-alone educational activity well into the future.

Another attractive aspect of this year's Spring Meeting will be the social program. There will be ample opportunity in the evenings to enjoy the splendor of New York City and the theaters on and off Broadway—a very nice complement to the educational activities.

The College continues to work diligently to bring surgical education programs closer to surgeons' practices in a number of ways, including Web casting and other products that are currently available and in various stages of development. Your ideas and suggestions for further activities will be welcomed, appreciated, and seriously considered.



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If you have comments or suggestions about this or other issues, please send them to Dr. Russell at fmp@facs.org.