



by Lenworth M. Jacobs, Jr., MD, MPH, FACS

The Board of Governors' Committee on Chapter Activities (GCCA) serves as an advocate for the chapters of the American College of Surgeons. There are 65 U.S. chapters, two in Canada, and 33 international. The College staff who work with the GCCA are in the Division of Member Services.

The GCCA has been very interested in bringing forward the concerns of the Governors of the chapters to the Board of Regents in order to assist the leadership in setting policy for the American College of Surgeons. An electronic survey instrument was developed and distributed to all Governors of the College. The areas that were of greatest concern to the Governors were identified and an agenda for discussion, with an open forum with both the Governors and the Regents, was established. At the College's 2008 Clinical Congress in San Francisco, CA, a discussion that allowed the Governors to present their views and have specific questions answered by the Board of

Regents was presented. This forum generated numerous questions from the Governors, allowing for a broad discussion of several topics that were included in the Statement on Health Care Reform generated by the College.

The Statement on Health Care Reform generated three critical and interrelated goals for health care. They included recommendations on quality and safety (the first goal). The specific recommendations that the American College of Surgeons urged the Congress and Administration to support, and a series of statements that the American College of Surgeons committed itself to deliver, are listed in the document. The second goal was ensuring universal access to affordable, high-quality, safe surgical care. This goal requires that the nation has a well-trained and available surgical workforce to meet the needs of all surgical patients. Similar to the first goal, the College urged the Congress and Administration to support a number of items and committed to pro-

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viding education programs, focusing research and advocacy efforts and developing systems to eliminate disparities in the availability and delivery of surgical care.

The final goal was that of a reduction of health care costs. This objective generated an important series of discussion items, resulting in a strong statement that encourages involvement with enhanced participation of patients in their own health care decision making and the development of payment mechanisms that promote quality and value. The statement also spoke to the appropriate and compassionate palliative care for patients with life-limiting illnesses. The College also recognized that payment for a sustainable workforce needed to be accomplished in conjunction with overall health care reforms.

The discussion between the Governors and Regents was then reviewed by the Regents and the final document was widely disseminated to surgeons, health policy administrators, govern-

mental entities, and professional colleagues.

Another major item that has been of significant concern for the College and has been discussed extensively by the committee is the fact that the Fellows of the College are getting older and there needs to be a major initiative to attract younger surgeons to join the American College of Surgeons.

The GCCA's Membership and Diversity Subcommittee has worked closely with the Division of Member Services. There are a number of initiatives that will be promulgated throughout the upcoming year to attract surgeons-in-training to join the College before completion of their residency. It is thought that exposing young surgeons to the full range of services that the College provides and engaging them in the committees of the College, including governance, is a fine way to attract the best and brightest young surgeons to join the American College of Surgeons.

The GCCA's electronic survey has shown that there is a need for more effective communication with the Fellows of the College. This survey finding has led to a series of live Web-based seminars in which topics are presented by the leadership of the College, and Fellows are encouraged to use real-time Web services to have their questions asked and answered. Participation in these seminars has been steadily increasing. The most recent webinar included questions from Fellows from other continents.

The GCCA has a robust International Activi-
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ties Subcommittee that has addressed the issue of modifying the criteria to become a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. There was widespread agreement that the highest clinical, ethical, and professional standards should be maintained while identifying and reducing administrative barriers that have made it a challenge for surgeons elsewhere in the world to join the College and participate in the educational offerings presented at the Clinical Congress and at other forums. This initiative was thought to

be extremely important, as the educational offerings of the College are widely recognized as being of excellent quality and are thought to give great benefit to surgeons throughout the world. The College is also working to increase the ability to provide ongoing education in an electronic format that can be accessed through the Web.

The GCCA aggressively advocates for the broad range of members in all chapters nationally and internationally. □