

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Background: The Standing Committee on Communication and Technology met on Tuesday, January 17, 2023 via a virtual meeting. The following Commissioners serving on the Standing Committee participated in the discussion: Dr. Joel Berg (chair), Dr. Willie Keith Beasley (attended a portion of the meeting), Dr. Carolyn Brown, Mr. Marco Gargano, Dr. Amid Ismail, Dr. Barbara Krieg-Menning, and Dr. Brent Larson. Ms. Martha McCaslin was unable to attend. Dr. Sanjay Mallya, chair, and Dr. Maxine Feinberg, vice chair, *ex officio*, Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), were unable to attend. Dr. Sherin Tooks, senior director, CODA, and Ms. Jamie Asher Hernandez, Ms. Kirsten Nadler, Ms. Kathleen Navickas, and Ms. Kelly Stapleton, managers, CODA, and Ms. Cathryn Albrecht, senior associate general counsel, ADA/CODA were also in attendance. Ms. Peggy Soeldner, manager, CODA, was unable to attend. The Committee began its meeting with a review of the Committee's charge. The Committee discussed the following items:

CODA Website Analytics: The Standing Committee reviewed the Commission's website analytics for the period of January through December 2022, noting over 1.5 million page views of CODA's website and over 230,000 unique users accessing the site. The Committee noted elevated website traffic within the month following the Commission Winter and Summer meetings, suggesting that individuals visit the CODA website to obtain new information and updates. Some of the most trafficked webpages include the Standards, Find a Program, Unofficial Actions, and Policies and Procedures pages. Approximately 87% of users are within the United States and 13% are international. Over 70% of site traffic occurred through new users, and the predominate device used was a desktop, with phone access as a secondary source.

The Standing Committee found these analytics to be informative to understanding how the public, students, educators, and the profession may use the Commission's website. The Committee also learned that the Commission's website was redesigned and launched in October 2022, noting that the analytics in the coming year will better inform the Commission on the ways in which it can enhance communication with its broad communities of interest. The Standing Committee believed that trend data could provide meaningful insight into the Commission's next Communication Plan, which will be initiated in 2023.

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

2019-2023 CODA Communication Plan: The Standing Committee reviewed and discussed various aspects of the 2019-2023 Communication Plan (**Appendix 1**). The Committee also discussed the Commission's Summer 2021 directive to review the Communication Plan in 2022-2023, in order to ensure that the next communication plan will address the Commission's upcoming strategic needs as well as the ongoing communication and technology needs of the Commission, including an electronic accreditation tool. The 2022-2026 Strategic Plan adopted

by the Commission in Summer 2021 includes a goal related to *“regularly assessing its [CODA’s] communication, messaging strategies, and platforms to enhance its [CODA’s] impact.”* This goal will be accomplished through strategies to *“obtain a baseline for communication and messaging; develop electronic platforms to deliver messaging across communities of interest; and enhance communication on a regular basis from Commission staff to governmental agencies (Federal, State and Local).”*

The Ad Hoc Committee noted that the most recent communication survey was conducted in 2017 and could serve as a starting point to develop a new survey to engage the communities of interest to establish the next CODA Communication Plan. The Commission discussed topics that may be addressed in the survey, including preferred modality of communication, types of communications, frequency and length of communications, and the need for educational communications to inform the communities of CODA’s purpose, mission, and processes. Following discussion, the Standing Committee planned to develop a survey instrument in Spring 2023 for distribution Summer/Fall 2023, which will inform the next communication plan. The Subcommittee will meet and develop a strategy for data collection and analysis related to the next Communication Plan, with a report in Summer 2023.

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

Electronic Accreditation Platform: The Standing Committee discussed the Commission’s continued need to identify, secure, develop and support a long-term solution for an electronic accreditation tool. The Committee noted that CODA launched an electronic accreditation platform in February 2021 to support the submission of applications and self-study documents from programs, and access of these materials by site visit team members. Although the current electronic accreditation platform has supported CODA’s basic business needs, it was noted that a robust, comprehensive, easy-to-use electronic accreditation platform is vital to CODA’s ongoing mission, as evidenced in CODA’s most recent 2022-2026 Strategic Plan goal that the Commission be *“efficient in managing the accreditation processes, both internal and external.”* The Standing Committee learned that CODA’s Director is working with ADA Legal and Information Technology staff to develop a contract with a potential vendor. More information will be provided as available.

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

Commission Actions:

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 / Zoom
- 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: [blue text indicates completed deliverable; red indicates 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 *new E-Accreditation system to communicate with accredited programs*
 - Message boards, dashboards and online alerts
 - February 2021, CODA implemented online submission portal for program self-study and supporting documentation and accreditation applications
 - 2023 – develop new E-Accreditation portal
- [Begin early- to mid-2019, ongoing:] Use online training software to train CODA volunteers
 - Annual mandatory training began in 2019 and includes a PowerPoint instructional module and online quiz that must be completed.
- [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
 - CODA website will undergo a revision to its layout based upon ongoing changes made site-wide to the ADA website platform. Changes expected in 2021-2022
 - Fall 2021: CODA web domain (website name) changed as ADA migrated to another site
 - October 2022 – published new CODA website

- Re-design website layout with more imagery [*Communicator*]
- 2020: Launch automatic site visit schedules portal
 - On hold due to priority in automating the annual accreditation fee process

Communication Metrics: (See TAB 2 Web Analytics)

- Increase year-to-year CODA Alert Click rates
- Improve website user, download, and bounce rates
- Increase *Communicator* page visits

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 second half of 2020 through 2021, Commission, Hearings, Review Committee, Site Visitor Training, and other sessions were conducted virtually
 - 2022 – virtual Commission meetings (as needed), Hearings on Standards, Review Committee, Site Visitor Training, and Training for New Commission, Review Committee and Appeal Board members were conducted virtually.
- [2020 through 2023:] Publish & promote editorial/thought leadership articles

Communication Metrics:

- Number of editorial articles published & webinars posted or held live
 - Meetings & Webinars held virtually in 2022
 - 34 Review Committee meetings
 - Two Meetings of the Commission
 - Two Hearings on Standards
 - 2022 Site Visitor Training session
 - 2022 Training for new Commission, Review Committee and Appeal Board members
 - Various other training and presentations
- Webinar Page: increase Page Visit rate
 - Track individual video downloads to determine topics of interest
 - See Analytics
 - The *Accreditation News Page*
 - See Analytics
- Feedback via next Communication Follow-up Survey in 2022/2023

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.