REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Background: The Standing Committee on Communication and Technology met on Thursday, January 20, 2022 via a virtual meeting. The following Commissioners serving on the Standing Committee participated in the discussion: Dr. Joel Berg (chair), Dr. Carolyn Brown, Mr. Marco Gargano, Dr. Amid Ismail, Dr. Barbara Krieg-Menning, Dr. Brent Larson, and Ms. Martha McCaslin. Dr. Willie Keith Beasley was unable to attend. In addition, Dr. Bruce Rotter, chair, and Dr. Sanjay Mallya, vice chair, ex officio, Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), attended the meeting. Dr. Sherin Tooks, director, CODA, Ms. Jamie Asher Hernandez, Ms. Kirsten Nadler, Ms. Jennifer Snow, and Ms. Peggy Soeldner, managers, CODA, and Ms. Cathryn Albrecht, senior associate general counsel, ADA/CODA were also in attendance. 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 April 1, 2021 to September 30, 2021, representing Quarter 2 (Q2) and Quarter 3 (Q3), compared with the same period in 2020. The Standing Committee noted a total of 436,222 page views during Q2 and Q3, representing 140,651 unique users and 205,537 sessions on CODA’s website. The predominate device used to access CODA’s website is a desktop computer, followed by telephones and tablets. For both Quarters 2 and 3, a majority of users were in the 25-34 age group, with over 60% of users identified as female, and over 67% of users identified as new visitors. The most frequently downloaded documents are the Dental Hygiene Standards, Dental Standards, Dental Assisting Standards, Evaluation and Operational Policies and Procedures Manual, Unofficial Actions, Fees, and Complaint Guidelines. The Find a Program accredited program listing continues to be a top page view, followed by the Accreditation Standards page, and File a Complaint page, although all of these pages demonstrated fewer views compared to the same time in 2020. The Standing Committee found these analytics to be extremely informative and helpful to understanding how the public, students, educators, and the profession may use the Commission’s website. Given the Commission’s work in international accreditation, the Standing Committee requested information, if it can be obtained, on the views and downloads of CODA website materials from domestic versus international users. Additionally, the Standing Committee believed that trend data from several years could provide meaningful insight into the Commission’s next Communication Plan.

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 noted more than 30 formal communications and numerous supplemental communications, which the Commission disseminated in 2021 to its broad communities of interest, including the CODA
Communicator Newsletter, training announcements and programs, CODA meeting actions, updates and presentations, calls for comment, notice on revisions to Standards, calls for nominations, and publication of the CODA Annual Report, to name a few.

The Committee 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 Standing Committee noted that 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).”

Following discussion, the Standing Committee planned to begin the work of developing the next communication plan by forming a Subcommittee of the Standing Committee to develop a plan of action in Spring 2022, for consideration by the full Standing Committee and Commission in Summer 2022. The Subcommittee will meet and develop a strategy for data collection and analysis related to the next Communication Plan, with a report in Summer 2022.

**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 the ADA has directed resources in 2022 to review alternate electronic accreditation tools and develop a new system for the Commission. The Standing Committee believed that CODA should develop a list of all of its business requirements related to staff, volunteer, and program utilization of the site, so that the Commission obtains a tool that facilitates its business needs. Further, the Committee believed that it would be helpful to identify issues and concerns with the current tool, in order to ensure these items are resolved in any replacement tool selected by the Commission. The Standing Committee noted that committee members, along with CODA volunteers and program directors, could provide assistance to Beta test future software solutions at the appropriate time. The Standing Committee concluded that
the Subcommittee may further discuss the development of the electronic accreditation platform, and this topic would continue to be monitored with updates at subsequent Standing Committee and Commission meetings as new developments occur.

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

**Commission Actions:**

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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 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
  - February 2021, CODA implemented online submission portal for program self-study and supporting documentation and accreditation applications
- **[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
  - 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 relationships, 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
Standing Committee on Communication and Technology
Commission Only
Winter 2022

- [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
- [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 2021
    - 28 Review Committee meetings
    - Two Meetings of the Commission
    - Hearings on Standards
    - 2021 Site Visitor Training session
    - 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 “semi-independent agency of the ADA.” In 2012, 41% (n=709) chose correctly.