

Celebrating Our 50th Anniversary: Reflecting on Past Accomplishments. Planning for Tomorrow's Successes.

2022 President and CEO Annual Membership Report Submitted by Kara Caruthers, MSPAS, PA-C, and Sara Fletcher, PhD

2022 marked an important milestone: PAEA's 50th Anniversary. Throughout the year, we've reflected on how far the PA profession and our community of educators have come in the 50 years since our founding. Both the Association and our members have done remarkable work to advance work in the field, support PA educators in their efforts to train competent and compassionate providers, and increase access to quality health care. Throughout this past year, PAEA has invited past presidents and trailblazers in the profession to share perspectives on key moments in the Association's history and the principles that have contributed to continued growth over five decades.

First and foremost, we believe that PAEA's success is owed to our members. It would be impossible to overstate how much our Association values and relies on our members' perspectives. To make continual advancements in PA education, we regularly seek out member feedback to help ensure our offerings evolve with their needs, but also because we believe members should play a key role in shaping our future. In the coming months, we will continue the tradition of engaging members to discuss key issues in PA education as we host town hall events and launch a comprehensive market analysis to gain an even deeper understanding of their values, needs, and preferences.

Our 50th anniversary provides us with an opportunity to not only reflect on the past but also to look ahead to the future. This year, PAEA launched a new strategic plan that will serve as a living roadmap to navigating complex issues facing our profession and determine how best to support members while working toward a shared vision for the future. This strategic plan outlines a core ideology – a shared vision, mission, and goals – that transcends changes to our environment. The Board and staff's commitment to core values of justice, equity, inclusion, diversity, quality, collaboration, well-being, learning, service, and sustainability is evident in their work throughout the year.

Below are highlights from this year's progress in advancing the strategic plan.

GOAL A: Be the primary source of educational resources and professional development for PA educators

Assessment

PAEA's formative and summative tools go beyond assessment to help programs train qualified and competent PAs, and help those future PAs prepare for the responsibility that lies ahead. PAEA now administers over 100,000 exams a year across all exam types; PACKRAT® is currently used by 285 programs, End of Rotation™ by 253 programs, and End of Curriculum™ by 201 programs. Quality national comparative data gives programs the insight they need to ensure students meet their program's high standards and keep pace with peers at programs across the country.

This year, PAEA Assessment has focused on developing a new, next generation exam platform to modernize exam development, management, delivery, and score reporting. The new exam platform will integrate with PAEA's membership management system for a seamless user experience. The transition to the new exam delivery platform is still in progress; we will introduce the new platform once it meets our high standards for a seamless transition and outstanding user experience.

PAEA Member Community

Over the course of the year, PAEA staff have continued to improve the online Member Community experience, creating a simple, secure, and seamless digital solution. Though this work typically occurs behind the scenes, members benefit by gaining access to a one-stop digital hub that allows them to tap into our extensive collection of resources, connect with colleagues, and register for events via a central platform. When the new PAEA Assessment Platform launches, members will also be able to purchase, schedule, and deliver examinations directly from the Member Community, eliminating the need for a separate login and platform.

Research

Research efforts at PAEA continue to focus on service to our members and furthering the field of PA education. The Research Team fulfilled 20 data requests, consisting of custom reports or raw data from 20 unique data sources, for members representing 18 distinct programs/organizations. Likewise, PAEA continues to support PA education research in the form of the Don Pederson Research Grant, the Faculty-Generated Research Grant, the Career Advancement Scholarship, and the AAPA-PAEA Research Fellowship, which saw its most diverse group of fellows in the 2021-2022 cycle. The 2021-2022 grant and award cycle included funding of 14 distinct PA

educators/researchers. Additionally, the PAEA Research Team contributed directly to the field via five national conference presentations and an upcoming publication in *Academic Medicine*.

GOAL B: Educate and inspire programs to prepare the next generation of PAs who deliver quality patient care and are representative of our nation's population.

Advocacy

Building upon wins in 2021 to expand funding for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), 2022 saw the conclusion of the first application cycle for which PA students were eligible for the NHSC Students to Service program. This program provides up to \$120,000 in total loan repayment assistance for eligible borrowers. Our advocacy work has contributed to an over 300% increase in the number of PA students in the NHSC pipeline since 2017. To help students and recent graduates take advantage of the NHSC, the Government Relations Team developed a comprehensive NHSC resource page to help students and recent graduates assess which program may be the best fit.

2022 also saw the enactment of legislation that PAEA has advocated in support of over the past several years. As a component of the fiscal year 2022 omnibus appropriations bill, Congress passed the Rural MOMS Act – bipartisan legislation that seeks to improve access to obstetrics care in rural communities by authorizing \$5 million annually through fiscal year 2027 to support OB/GYN clinical rotations for PA and other health professions students. Congress also passed the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act in March, authorizing \$35 million annually through fiscal year 2024 to allow grantees like PA programs to support the training of students in evidence-based strategies to promote resilience and reduce the incidence and severity of mental health conditions.

Beyond the creation of new programs, PAEA's advocacy has led to significant proposed funding increases for several high-priority Title VII health workforce development programs. In both the House and Senate for fiscal year 2023, key appropriators have proposed a \$5 million increase for primary care training and enhancement grants to support clinical rotations and a \$3.05 million increase for the Health Careers Opportunity Program to strengthen the pipeline of underrepresented minority students to the health professions.

Educational Programming

This spring, PAEA reached a virtual audience of 153 faculty and staff across the nation via a new Teaching Strategies webinar series. This new educational series provided access to national book authors who shared unique perspectives on topics including Learning Elements, Hybrid Classrooms, Teaching for Learning, Gamification, and Equity for a series culminating in a PA Faculty Reaction panel, moderated by Faculty Development Mission Advancement Commission (FDMAC) chair, Cody Sasek.

The Association also welcomed 418 faculty members to Virtual Workshop Offerings this past year. Recognizing our members' request for support and resources in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, PAEA introduced new workshop offerings, including "Integrating Cultural Humility and Mindfulness in Test Item Writing" and "Equity by Design." In line with our goal to support educators across a continuum of experience and faculty roles, we offered New Faculty, New Clinical Coordinators, and New Program Jump Start Workshops and introduced an Accelerator series for New Faculty and New Program Directors. We look forward to connecting with an additional group of 212 educators at in-person Fall Workshops.

Additionally, we are thrilled to reunite with nearly 1,000 educators in San Diego, CA at the 2022 Education Forum. Once again, attendees will be able to attend top-notch educational presentations featuring thought-provoking speakers, plus have numerous and unique opportunities to connect with industry leaders and colleagues. Also, and in line with our value of inclusion, PAEA is excited to offer an on-demand pass for those unable to attend the Education Forum in person. Regardless of whether registrants attend in-person or virtually, they will have access to 139 sessions (40 sessions that are DEI-focused) with a maximum of 96.75 hours of Category 1 CME credit. Forum attendees will have the opportunity to connect with 49 exhibitors and to engage with seven different Solutions Circles, which include small group discussions that provide new, innovative answers to current PA education challenges.

While we are excited to gather in person, PAEA leadership continues to prioritize the safety and well-being of all members and staff. All in-person participants must follow PAEA's Health & Safety Policy which includes full COVID-19 vaccination as outlined by CDC safety and masking guidelines. Colored lanyards that indicate an individual attendee's degree of comfort with customary social greetings will also be provided. These health and safety steps are actions PAEA has taken to support its vision of "Health for All."

GOAL C: Eliminate systemic racism and bias in PA education.

Admissions

As part of our commitment to the principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, PAEA made improvements to the CASPA fee waiver program which has yielded impressive results. During the 2021-22 admissions cycle, PAEA increased the CASPA fee waiver pool and upped the available amount of financial aid from \$179 to \$235 to remove a financial barrier for eligible applicants. Remarkably, for the first time since the 2012-13 cycle, funds were not exhausted prior to the end of the cycle, meaning there was enough funding to assist all applicants with a financial need. Also, the Team created digital resources to increase both program and applicant knowledge about the Fee Waiver Program.

Earlier this year, the Admissions Team produced the four-part, CME-eligible BIPOC Healthcare Educator Webinar Series, which provided mentorship and resources for practicing PAs to transition toward working in an education setting. The PAEA team also created a new webpage to house public resources for BIPOC faculty educators and those who may be interested in entering the PA education space.

The Admissions Team collaborated with programs across the country to lead outreach sessions to inform prospective PA applicants about the profession, the application process, and life as a PA. In July 2022, PAEA hosted the inaugural Diversity Recruitment Virtual Fair. Holding the event on a weekend led to increased participation, as 3,470 students and 112 PA programs registered, representing a 10% increase from previous years.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

2022 has been a year of learning and growth for PAEA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) department. Through the hiring of a director and coordinator, and reassigning a dedicated project manager, DEI has evolved into its own department for the first time at PAEA. The DEI Team has launched multiple initiatives to hear directly from underrepresented in medicine (URiM) PA faculty, staff, and students, including the Vignette project, the Reading Between the Lines Book Club, and most recently, the Student and Faculty/Staff Anti-Racism Town Halls. These conversations have laid the foundation for robust programming initiatives that will launch over the course of the next year and will be further developed by our eventual Chief DEI Officer, who will join the existing DEI Team in the next few months.

Organizational Communications

Each year, the PAEA president is presented with an opportunity to spotlight key issues in PA education. President Kara Caruthers looked to her two most recent predecessors for inspiration, blending Past President Michel Statler's focus on fostering wellness in the wake for the pandemic with Past President Howard Straker's focus on improving justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion within PA education. President Caruthers challenged PAEA members to focus on the critical intersection of DEI principles and wellness, noting "we cannot expect a person to be well when their full identity is not seen." To create an equitable and inclusive workplace and prevent members from marginalized groups from feeling invisible or disrespected, it is necessary to address the unique needs of every student, staff, and faculty member. Throughout the year, President Caruthers has engaged in public conversations with members of minoritized groups in an effort to increase visibility and inclusion of these communities in PA education.

At the 2022 PAEA Education Forum, attendees will hear from Daniel Dawes, author of *The Political Determinants of Health*, about the link between politics and health inequity, as well as Dr. Lesley Brooks, who will discuss how equity and inclusion affect patient care and patient outcomes. Dr. Brooks will share her lived experience as a black female physician who has cared for some of the most vulnerable populations.

GOAL D: Sustain and strengthen a positive, healthy organizational culture and operational backbone.

Operations

One of biggest moments of 2022 occurred this past summer when the Board of Directors announced its unanimous decision to appoint Sara Fletcher as Chief Executive Officer. Dr. Fletcher brings a wealth of experience in educational leadership and a long tenure with the Association—including two terms as interim CEO, first in 2019 and again in 2022. This promotion will allow Dr. Fletcher to continue her progress in developing organizational structures, processes, and resources to advance PAEA's vision, mission, and goals.

This year, the PAEA team has grown with the addition of ten new staff members across the Association: Tabitha Ratcliffe, Simone Stewart, Mareesa Hakos, Ashley Tucker, Zachary Britt, Arielle Reotutar, Katie Strobush, Gremmarie Alma Jose, Kelly Powell, and Emma Sellars. Their knowledge and expertise will accelerate the Association's work in

accordance with the new strategic plan and enhance PAEA's ability to offer a meaningful and valuable experience for members and staff alike.

On the Horizon

2022 has offered many opportunities to reflect on our history and the values that we hold important. With a new strategic plan to guide our way, the Board of Directors, the PAEA staff and Leadership Team, and the help of our volunteers, we look forward to accelerating efforts to advance the profession.

Members will see continued updates to PAEA's offerings in line with our values. *The Journal of PA Education* will transition to an online-only publication, consistent with the organization's core value of sustainability and reducing our carbon footprint. This shift will have auxiliary benefits as well, such as shortening the time between article submission and publication, and more timely dissemination of knowledge.

Our commitment to service continues with the upcoming release of a comprehensive Advocacy Curriculum for all member programs. This offering will provide members with access to standard webinars, short-form instructional videos, and student engagement guides to strengthen professional issues content and build leadership capacity. In the latter part of 2023, PAEA will mark a return to in-person advocacy with the launch of the Association's inaugural Policy Summit. This event will build upon PAEA's traditional advocacy day offerings by allowing attendees to hear directly from key policy leaders in the executive and legislative branches while expanding the footprint of PA education on Capitol Hill.

The Association will launch a Leadership Toolkit to help programs develop their students as future leaders as well as explore additional leadership development opportunities for faculty through a fellowship offering.

PAEA believes wholeheartedly in the power of collaboration. To that end, we will help increase partnerships among programs within the same state. Moreover, we will resume our Regional Education Meetings to help local faculty connect and access professional development closer to home. Members will also see additional opportunities to shape the future of the Association as we launch a comprehensive membership survey, virtual retreats, and listening sessions.

After a half century of progress, we are excited to embark on the Association's next 50 years and invite you to join our efforts to lead, innovate, and advance excellence in PA education in the years to come.