



American Academy of Certified Public Managers®

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Fellow AACPM Members,

I am writing you today regarding an issue of extreme importance to the Academy. The Academy is at a critical crossroads in our existence, experiencing pressures from within and from outside entities that are challenging us to rethink everything about who we are, what we do, how we function, and why we exist. Please read through the information that follows, as I present you with some historical perspective, the current reality, and where we are going from here.

At the 2008 House of Delegates (HOD) meeting in Columbus, Ohio, Past President Dennis Magee gave a passionate presentation about the need for the Academy to evolve in order to survive. Based on his presentation, the HOD directed the Board to initiate a committee to look at the issues and make some recommendations to the HOD for action. Over the past two years, the Evolution Committee has been hard at work on this assigned task. In 2009 the Evolution Committee benchmarked 30 other professional organizations, including ASPA, SHRM, APWA, ASTD, GFOA, ICMA and others. The benchmarking study data is attached to the email which delivered this letter to you for your convenience and review. This effort resulted in some revealing information.

First, AACPM is an all volunteer organization. All work is done completely by volunteers, including running the organization administratively, committee activity, planning and executing the annual conference, and meeting the regulatory and legal requirements of a non-profit organization. Of the organizations reviewed, AACPM is the only all volunteer organization.

Second, AACPM is a bottom up organization. Everything comes through the Societies at the local level, up to the Academy, including finances, membership rosters, and information flow. Of the organizations reviewed, AACPM is the only organization that is structured and functions that way. The others are top down, with all finances, membership and information starting at the national level and flowing down to the local level, with local reporting requirements.

Third, AACPM collects dues of \$20 per year, which fund operational costs, the website, newsletter production, and conference related costs. Membership benefits are relatively limited. Of the organizations reviewed, AACPM has the lowest level of membership benefits, but also the lowest dues. The average dues for other organizations range from under \$100 annually to nearly \$400 annually, with average dues near \$150 per year.

In 2010 the Evolution Committee discussed the benchmarking results, and discussed some of the realities surrounding Academy operational difficulties and concerns expressed by some of our members about benefits, value and function. The committee came to the conclusion that the Academy had to change in order to survive. Exactly what these changes were and how these changes were to be accomplished was left to the 2011 Committee to evaluate.

That brings us to this year, and some current realities that had to be considered in order to determine what was necessary. These realities include declining membership, struggling Societies, lingering concerns about service and value provided to our members, and organizational competition.

Membership in the Academy has been unstable for years, and has recently seen several straight years of decline. Consider that in 2005 our membership peaked at 1,752 members. Since then, with only 2007 as an exception, our membership has declined every year. In 2010 we ended the year with 1,316 members, and as of the first quarter this year, we are down to approximately 1,200 members. This is a disturbing trend, made even more so when you consider that there are over 23,000 CPMs nationwide, meaning we are only capturing 5.6% of graduates (this doesn't even consider eligible Associate Members). Equally disturbing is our annual membership turnover. At first quarter 2011, there were 417 members from 2010 who had not yet renewed their membership. That means that nearly a third of our membership has turned over this year. Clearly we are not doing the things we need to do to retain our members. Membership numbers are further threatened by retirements, as many members retire and choose not to continue their membership due to reduced income, the lack of a reduced rate retiree membership classification, and no longer needing the networking and resources their membership provided.

In addition to the membership challenges, many of our Societies are struggling as well. Our founding Society, Georgia, has been gone for years. In the past few years we have seen the Virginia Society fold; The District of Columbia and Alabama Societies fold and then return (DC as the National Capitol Region Society); a Michigan Society almost form, but then stall out and never complete the chartering process; and Washington, Texas, Louisiana and Kansas have struggled except for the dedicated effort of a few members to keep them going.

The value of membership in AACPM has also been repeatedly questioned in recent years. Each year \$20 of your membership dues goes to the Academy. In return AACPM provides a quarterly newsletter, a website, access to the annual Academy Conference, the Wilkinson Scholarship, and recognition of outstanding CPM practitioners and students through the Henning and Askew awards. In addition, opportunities for leadership development are provided through participation on the Academy Board and committees. Understandably, though, our members want access to online training, webinars, bigger and better publications, access to additional resources, availability of job postings, and facilitated communication with each other through chat or interactive communication functions. We know this through several different surveys over the past 10 years, all of which have shown the same desires. Unfortunately this level of benefit can't be had for \$20 per year and an all volunteer staff of 7 Board members and a handful of committees.

Finally, our sister organization, the National CPM Consortium, also finds itself at a crossroads in its existence. To ensure their survival and growth, the Consortium has sought out new partnership opportunities. They have recently agreed in concept to an important training partnership with ASPA. Additionally, a few Consortium members have founded a new ASPA Section, the Section for Certified Public Management (ASPA CPM Section), and in fact sit on the Board of that Section. The ASPA CPM Section is open to membership for anyone for an additional \$10 annually (above the \$100 annual ASPA dues), being a CPM is not required. This relationship opens up new opportunities for the Consortium; however, your AACPM Board and Evolution Committee are concerned that the ASPA CPM Section may result in those ASPA members who become CPMs from joining AACPM. The first sign of this is that first graduates of the Iowa CPM program decided to form an ASPA chapter instead of an AACPM Society.

It is important at this point that we understand a little about ASPA as well. ASPA is a professional organization for people who serve in the public sector, or work for vendors, contractors or others with an interest in the public sector (see www.aspanet.org). They have approximately 9000 members, and offer a wide array of benefits (publications, training, multiple workshops, etc). ASPA dues are \$100 annually, plus additional costs depending on your Chapter and/or Section affiliations. Additionally, ASPA has numerous paid staff members. Our organizations serve similar stakeholders, and have similar purposes and goals, with the biggest differentiator being the requirement of the CPM certification to become an AACPM member. The ASPA CPM Section (<http://www.aspaonline.org/scpm/>) seeks to further focus by stating it is "for academics and practitioners that are interested in the concept of Certified Public Management." This Section now has well over 200 members.

Now that you have the background information, here is where things stand.

The 2011 Evolution Committee has come to a number of conclusions that will be presented to the House of Delegates in Salt Lake City this October as recommendations for how the Academy should move forward. In a few days each of you will receive an invitation to participate in a survey about the future of the Academy in order for the Committee to collect additional detail, and to formulate the recommendations that will go forward to the House of Delegates. Following are the conclusions that will be addressed:

1. The Academy cannot survive if we continue to function as we do today, which is more like a club than a professional organization. It is time to transition to a top down structure. This means a stronger national organization. Among the items this could affect: memberships (new and renewals) could be processed by the Academy with rosters and Society dues transmitted to each Society quarterly; Societies could be expected to file annual activity and financial reports with the Academy; wide variations in Society procedures could be evaluated by the Academy with changes made to certain ones in order to bring more consistency to the organization.
2. We must advance toward paid staff. This could start as simply as a paid Executive Director position. Such a position would accomplish a number of things, such as: providing a permanent image (address, email, phone fax) rather than having our contact information change every year with the Board; ensuring that regulatory and administrative paperwork and filings are done on time; paying the Academy's bills; etc. This could also mean a corresponding change in the composition and duties of the Board as duties are shifted to the Executive Director.
3. The Academy must provide more value to our members, and to prospective members, in order to recruit and retain them. This means: providing more and higher quality publications; a more interactive website with more features like webinars and access to other online training; revamping the annual conference to be more in tune with today's training needs and desires, such as more regional workshops and local level delivery; and an assortment of other general membership benefits.
4. In order to accomplish these changes, we must increase dues to a level commensurate with the dues charged by other professional organizations. We cannot survive, much less grow, at a dues level of \$20 annually.

I want to thank each of you for taking the time to read all of this information, and in advance for participating in the survey when it arrives. In the meantime, if you have any questions about this information, I encourage you to contact any member of the Evolution Committee.

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Sincerely



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