

PRESIDENT'S REPORT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS VIRTUAL MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2023

Following are activity highlights since our September meeting.

MOU with National Baptist Convention USA

On January 9, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with National Baptist Convention USA President Rev. Dr. Jerry Young at NBCUSA's midwinter meeting in Birmingham, Ala. This momentous agreement will help improve health outcomes for African Americans and reduce health disparities as the Academy and NBCUSA collaborate to increase the number of African American registered dietitian nutritionists. COVID-19 brought to life many of the health disparities in at-risk communities. I noted that increasing the number of African American RDNs is a high priority for the Academy. Thanks go to Pat Babjak and Richard Boykin for orchestrating the signing of the agreement at the National Baptist Convention. Pat Babjak presented the aims of the partnership. Pat and I invited Dr. Evelyn Crayton, chair of the Academy's NBCUSA Task Force and June Thompson, the chair of NOBIDAN and NBCUSA Task Force member to join us on stage. More than 250 NBCUSA members attended the Academy presentation. The National Baptist Convention, USA founded in 1886, is the nation's oldest and largest African American religious convention with over 31,000 churches and 7.5 million members.

Way to Ring in 2023 ... Nasdaq's Closing Bell

Joined by members from the New York area, I had the pleasure of ringing Nasdaq's Closing Bell on January 3. Nasdaq invited the Academy to kick off Nasdaq's Wellness Week as a part of its commitment to feature companies and organizations dedicated to health and wellness. The goals of Nasdaq's Wellness Week match closely with the goals of the Academy. I was also joined by Academy RDNs and Spokespeople Sandra Arevalo and Theresa Gentile at the ceremony.



Academy's Recommendations Included: White House Conference

I represented the Academy at the historic September 28 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health. Former Academy President Donna S. Martin [spoke](#) at a panel discussion on "Nourishing Brighter Futures: Ensuring affordable food for all children and families." The Academy's [recommendations](#) were included in the White House's National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition and Health report, prioritizing nutrition security, which is a crucial step in addressing health equity and achieving the Academy's mission to accelerate improvements in global health and well-being through food and nutrition.

The day after the White House Conference, I moderated a town hall meeting for Academy members on important outcomes of the conference and next steps. During the town hall, we announced that the Academy and Foundation have pledged to accelerate efforts to diversify the nutrition and dietetics profession by awarding \$1 million in scholarships. In addition, the Academy will advance our efforts to bridge gaps in nutrition services and increase access to healthful school meals.

USDA Summit: Nutrition Security and Health Care

Immediate past treasurer Livleen Gill and I took part in an October 25 National Summit on Nutrition Security and Health Care at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I represented the Academy at this summit focused on celebrating and showcasing what the health care sector is doing to help advance

nutrition security and providing an opportunity to learn about innovative approaches and best practices. The summit built on the momentum of the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health to identify ways to work together to implement the National Strategy.

Conference Follow-up: Meeting with White House Domestic Policy Council

Academy representatives met October 31 with members of the White House Domestic Policy Council to discuss ongoing progress, next steps and opportunities to continue our collaborative work with the Biden administration, especially with commitments in follow-up to the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health. We pointed out that the Academy is distinguished from other organizations by our extensive formal education and training that provides expertise in all aspects of food and nutrition, enabling us to play a key role in improving people's nutritional status to both prevent and treat chronic disease. We noted that the value that RDNs bring to the table is our expertise in translating science and evidence; and that the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine maintains that "the registered dietitian is currently the single identifiable group of health-care practitioners with standardized education, clinical training, continuing education and national credentialing requirements necessary to be directly reimbursed as a provider of nutrition therapy." We conveyed our appreciation for new policies for disease prevention and treatment; asked the administration to prioritize support for medical nutrition therapy as an effective disease management strategy; and noted our hope for further dialogue.

Food Industry Collective

On October 28, I attended the "Food Industry Collective: Commitments in Action" event in Washington, DC, co-hosted by Food Marketing Inc. (FMI) and the Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. The event was designed to stimulate excitement and, together, build on and create new commitments to help advance the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health National Strategy.

Successful Nutrition and Dietetics State Advocacy Summit

More than 200 members attended the Academy's inaugural virtual State Advocacy Summit on November 9 and 10. Policy leaders from affiliates and DPGs attended educational sessions and engaged in discussion to sharpen their skills to advocate for key Academy state-level policy priorities. Attendees learned best practices for building action-oriented and effective public policy panels and identified opportunities for state advocacy following the 2022 elections. Breakout rooms allowed peer to peer networking and engagement, setting the stage for effectively executing affiliate plans of work throughout the year. Follow-up resources will be sent to those who registered and those who were not able to attend and posted to the Public Policy Panel Community of Interest.

March 28-30: 2023 Nutrition and Dietetics Advocacy Summit

Registration is now open for the 2023 Nutrition and Dietetics Advocacy Summit, which will take place virtually March 28 to 30. This is a can't-miss event for hundreds of nutrition and dietetics practitioners to sharpen their advocacy skills with a deep-dive into key policy issues that impact the health of the nation and profession. The 2023 summit will focus on two of the Academy's top policy and advocacy efforts: medical nutrition therapy expansion and child nutrition. Attendees will receive training on these issues during the first two days of the event to ensure they are prepared for congressional meetings on March 30, which will be conducted in small groups with a designated leader.

Briefing on Academy’s MNT Expansion Efforts

Expanding access to and payment for medical nutrition therapy continues to be one of the Academy’s top priorities. On December 8, Academy members and RDNs Marcy Kyle, Wendy Phillips and treasurer-elect Krista Yoder Latortue led an [online briefing](#) on what the Academy is doing to expand access to MNT. The briefing recapped the Academy’s efforts in the development of the historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health and highlighted the progress of the Medical Nutrition Therapy Act. The MNT Act, championed by the Academy, was included in the Health Equity and Accountability Act omnibus legislation in recognition of health equity implications of expanding access to nutrition care for conditions like obesity and hypertension. The early 2023 release of two new Academy resources were announced during the briefing: the “MNTWorks® Toolkit” and the “Power of Payment 2.0” program.

Developed by member leaders and Academy staff, the “MNTWorks® Toolkit” approaches MNT from the lens of a business professional and provides RDNs with a step-by-step playbook for advocating for improved access and coverage of MNT to a variety of stakeholders, regardless of practice setting. Building upon the success of the Academy’s “Power of Payment” program, the new and enhanced “Power of Payment 2.0” program consists of a series of six short webinars that give listeners valuable information relating to payment and reimbursement for RDN provided services, including for MNT delivered via telehealth.

New Opportunities for Payment and Reimbursement Involvement

The Academy’s new Payment and Reimbursement Affinity Group will begin meeting in January 2023. Available only to members, affinity groups are forum-based events where staff, policy leaders and members discuss Academy advocacy priorities and strategies, share experience and determine how they can become involved in advocating. The first meeting of the Payment and Reimbursement Affinity Group will be Tuesday, January 24; it will meet the fourth Tuesday of every month, from 2-3 p.m. EST.

Additionally, all practitioners are invited to join the Academy’s weekly Reimbursement and Payment Office Hours. These office hours were on pause through the end of 2022, but in January, Academy staff will be available every Wednesday to answer questions on payment, reimbursement or coverage for nutrition services.

Joint Statement on Obesity Care

Access to care for people with chronic diseases is one of Academy’s top priorities. As part of our work to help eliminate roadblocks to obesity treatment, the Academy worked closely with the Obesity Society, Obesity Action Coalition, Obesity Medicine Association, American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery and the STOP Obesity Alliance to issue a joint statement on obesity as a disease. The purpose of the statement is to give the groups a shared starting point for talking about obesity that is consistent with how other chronic diseases are discussed.

Obesity is a highly prevalent chronic disease characterized by excessive fat accumulation or distribution that presents a risk to health and requires lifelong care. Virtually every system in the body is affected by obesity. Major chronic diseases associated with obesity include diabetes, heart disease and cancer. The body mass index (weight in kg/height in meters²) is used to screen for obesity, but it does not displace clinical judgement. BMI is not a measure of body fat. Social determinants, race, ethnicity and age may modify the risk associated with a given BMI. Bias and stigmatization directed at people with obesity contributes to poor health and impairs treatment. Every person with obesity should have access to evidence-based treatment.

The joint statement complements many years of work by the Academy and members to better understand and treat patients living with obesity.

Letter in *The Economist*: Malnutrition Quality Improvement Initiative

My [letter to the editor](#) of *The Economist* on the Academy's comprehensive series of initiatives to address malnutrition, was published online on September 23 following an article in the publication on recent improvements in hospital food for patients.

Letter in *Medscape*: Promoting the Expertise of RDNs

The online health news site Medscape published my [guest column](#) December 8, encouraging physicians to refer patients to registered dietitian nutritionists and promoting the use of the Academy's Find a Nutrition Expert service.

Interview with AMA: Gaps and Opportunities to Prevent and Treat Obesity

RDN Hollie Raynor, the Academy's alliance representative to The Obesity Society, conducted an interview with a consultant for the American Medical Association as the AMA conducts a landscape assessment to identify gaps and opportunities to effectively prevent and treat obesity both independently and in partnership with other organizations.

FDA Urged to Create Separate Administrations for Food and Drugs

A [report](#) by the Reagan-Udall Foundation calls on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to establish separate food and drug divisions in order to further strengthen the FDA's Human Foods Program. The Academy's support of FDA's increased focus on food-related issues was raised earlier in 2022 by Academy member and RDN Ginger Carney, who provided testimony during two Capitol Hill hearings focused on the infant formula shortage. The Academy and other organizations have encouraged and advocated for an evaluation of the FDA to ensure the structure of the administration supports food safety and that adequate resources and oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure consumer protection.

Meetings

October

- October 17-18: Alison Steiber represented the Academy at the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health's virtual Stakeholder Meeting for Research on Whole Person Health.
- October 18: Tammy Randall presented *Bridging the Boardroom and Classroom* to the Be Well Solutions dietetic internship.
- October 20: I presented *Bridging the Boardroom and Classroom* at Texas A&M University.

November

- November 1: Kevin Sauer presented *Bridging the Boardroom and Classroom* to the Mississippi State University Student Dietetic Association.
- November 1-4: Judy Rodriguez and Marty Yadrick represented the Academy at the ICDA board meeting in Toronto.
- November 2-3: I represented the Academy at "Agriculture for Health: Priority Setting to Solve the Ultimate Grand Challenge" hosted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and Texas A&M AgriLife Institute for Advancing Health through Agriculture. The purpose of this event was "to initiate a national dialogue with thought leaders that will ideally result in establishing priorities and

developing strategies to overcome existing barriers to position food and agriculture as a solution to public health challenges in the United States.”

- November 7: Lauri Wright presented *Bridging the Boardroom and Classroom* at the University of North Florida.
- November 22 Lauri Wright presented *Bridging the Boardroom and Classroom* at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center Dietetic Internship Program
- November 17: I met with ASPEN’s Chief Executive Officer Wanda Johnson to discuss possible collaboration opportunities between the Academy and ASPEN.
- November 28: Tammy Randall presented *Bridging the Boardroom and Classroom* at the University of Kentucky.
- November 30: Kevin Sauer presented *Bridging the Boardroom and Classroom* at Bluffton University.

January

- January 6: Pat Babjak, Alison Steiber, Sharon McCauley, and I had a follow-up call with ASPEN’s CEO Wanda Johnson and staff to review current projects that have historically focused on malnutrition, which is a core piece of the programs of work for both organizations.

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