Transformation in Progress: Implementing the Mandate of the Task Force on Restructuring

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Change came to my friend Michael like the Nor’easter now blasting my native New England with snow. His mother died suddenly last May, a first and most precious loss to his previously intact family of origin. The day after her funeral, he and his wife Susan went to the their youngest son’s graduation from college. And then the storm picked up.

His oldest daughter got married in September; he turned 50 in October, found out he was going to be a grandfather in November, and in January accepted a new position which will necessitate a move 1,000 miles away. When a storm with this kind of force finally seems at an end, the digging out begins.

We’re digging out these days at the NACC after a storm of changes resultant from the restructuring of our organization. Though we knew it was coming, the changes in NACC from the November Nashville meeting until now have blanketed us with activity. It is a strange feeling to move from the safety of a task force energetically engaged in discussion, ideas, blueprints, and presentations to the single standing responsibility to, as Nike would say, “just do it.”

And we’ve done it. This special section of Vision is our report to you of the changes that have taken place in this historic restructuring of the NACC. Guided by our value of stewardship, this report seeks to give you a full accounting of the ways in which we are utilizing the resources, human and material, to live out the mission of the NACC.

Board of Directors

The core responsibility of stewarding the mission of any organization is its Board. The six-month process of electing and appointing a new Board of Directors culminated in our first meeting the weekend of February 16–18, 2001. One full day of orientation included a review of our documents—mission, vision, values, constitution, and bylaws, and the Board manual—along with a presentation of the history and evolution of the NACC, a comprehensive review of the certification process, and a tour of the national office. The second day was given over to the business at hand (see “Another Step in Our Journey “ by President Richard Leliaert, OSC).
Meeting with this Board was an experience unlike any other meeting in my eight-plus years as Executive Director. Two reasons stand out clearly in marking the difference with this Board of Directors. First, there is the tremendous gift of having nonmembers on the Board. This gift, I believe, has both philosophical and practical implications. Philosophically, the NACC has the self-assurance to not only let “outsiders” in, but to invite “outsiders” to share in the power of leading and governing our association.

An important discussion within the task force focused on the reality of opening up the Board. It was an easy conversation until we moved into the number of “outside” persons on the Board. Should we not keep a majority of elected Board members? (The final decision was five elected, five appointed). The task force chose to present to the membership a governance model that would have the courage to trust the people we called forth and not a governance model that would seek to control the process.

The practical implication of outside members on the Board was immediately obvious. These women and men bring enormous talent and skills that we do not have by the nature of who we are as professionals. Business savvy, knowledge of organizational structure, finance and development, not-for-profit management are to name but a few. Extern members bring personal gifts and professional skills that can support our mission in a way that we could not without do as effectively.

The second gift of this new Board was the evident experience of having served on corporate Boards. Experienced Board members know the parameters in which they live out their responsibility in stewarding the mission. Every aspect of a Board meeting from the setting of agenda to the conduct of business is marked by discipline, a clear set of boundaries, and a protocol that facilitates the kind of oversight that a Board responsibility requires.

**National Office Staff: New Director Positions**

At the heart of the new structure was the choice to utilize the resources of NACC in the most effective and efficient manner. The dissolution of the regional structure was done to shift the monies spent for regional councils and committees to salaries for two full-time director positions at the national office. The rationale was that our resources were previously more directed toward supporting the structure than the mission. The intent was to provide direct service to our members in the areas of education and professional practice.

In July of last year, we initiated a job search by establishing a search
committee and by advertising for the positions of Director of Education and Director of Professional Practice. The members of the Search Committee were Rick Erickson (certified CPE supervisor, Pastoral Care Director, and former Standards Committee Chair from La Crosse, Wisconsin); Dr. Ann Healey (certified chaplain, diocesan Director of the Permanent Diaconate, and Grievance Panel member from Fort Worth, Texas); Sister Kathleen Smith, RSM, (certified chaplain, Pastoral Care Director, and former Education Committee Chair from Carbondale, Pennsylvania), and Rick Tank (Delegate to the Archbishop for Human Resources, and former Personnel Committee member from Milwaukee, Wisconsin).

For the Education position, we had approximately 10 applicants from around the country, and we brought four into Milwaukee for interviews. After interviewing these excellent candidates, we selected the new Director of Education, Susanne Chawszczewski, PhD, who started as an employee of the NACC on February 19, 2001 (see related story).

The Professional Practice position was more challenging to fill since one of the requirements was that the person needed to be a certified member of the NACC. After advertising the position several times, the Search Committee moved toward a more active search process whereby the names of potential candidates were suggested and then these persons were contacted and invited to make application. At the end of the interview process, we selected the new Director of Professional Practice, Michele Le Doux Sakurai who started as an employee of the NACC on March 19, 2001 (see related story).

The task force in its recommendations had left the option for considering some creative long distance arrangement as is increasingly more common in this age of advanced technology. After much discussion, the Search Committee determined that it was in the best interest of the new structure that both positions be on site at the national office in Milwaukee.

In our negotiation with Michele, she indicated that for personal reasons she needed to keep residency in Oregon for the next few years. The Search Committee supported my suggestion that we look at accommodating Michele’s need with an interim plan until she is free to move to Milwaukee. Michele and I have worked out a schedule whereby she will be in Milwaukee twice a month for four days at a time and the remainder of her work time will be accomplished long distance.

After consultation with leaders from other national organizations with
off-site employees, and creative thought and planning on our own, I am comfortable that this arrangement will help us in fulfilling the mission of the association.

The Search Committee did a tremendous service to the NACC, and myself personally, in their commitment to providing an excellent search process. The Committee met a half a dozen times on conference calls, reviewed materials, prepared questions, and came to Milwaukee for two onsite meetings.

**National Office Staff: Current Support Positions**

While in the process of hiring the two new directors, we needed to review the current positions at the national office and to assess the future needs given these new professional positions. It was immediately evident that in bringing on two directors we would need to increase our support staff. With the approval of the Executive Committee, I was authorized to add an additional full-time position.

Kathy Eldridge, formerly Office Manager and now Manager of Operations, joined me in reviewing the entire internal office structure and how we best could divide up the areas of work responsibilities within the national office. This resulted in a change of job titles and areas of responsibility for each position. We now have “Administrative Specialists” in the following areas: Membership, Finances, Communications, Professional Practice, and Special Projects. We likewise have a part-time position that is shared with the COMISS Network and special projects (see accompanying organization chart).

For the most part, the current staff members continue in their areas of responsibility except that membership services will now fold into one new position. I am happy to announce that we have hired Carol Folker as the new Administrative Specialist for Membership Services who started as an employee of the NACC on February 28, 2001.

In the forecast of all these changes, I want to commend the national office staff for their patience these past many months through this restructuring. From the beginning, I assured them that each of them would have a position with the NACC, but I did not know what the constellation of the new organizational chart would be. As many of you know firsthand, we have had an excellent national office staff, and I am sure the new additions will be equal in caliber.

**National Office Space**

In implementing the new structure we knew that we would have to
add office space for three new positions. The Manager of Operations and myself have worked these several months with building services here at the Archbishop Cousins Center in Milwaukee. As always, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, from Archbishop Rembert Weakland, OSB, and Bishop Richard Sklba to the Building Operations Manager, Bill Kreitzer, and his staff, has consistently sought to accommodate the NACC in their welcome and hospitality here at the archdiocesan center.

A vacant classroom next door to the present office is now under construction for three new offices. Kathy Eldridge has done a superb job of working with the construction in seeking bids, coordinating work schedules, purchasing equipment, and all the other details that come up in this kind of project. The anticipated completion of the new offices is around the beginning of April 2001.

**Identity Direction**

As we were thinking ahead toward implementing all of these changes, the idea of a change in our "logo" occurred to me. A change in the symbolic graphic of the NACC seemed appropriate given the significance of the changes that were happening in the association. Naively, I thought it was a matter of contacting an artist and asking her or him to come up with some suggestions. I learned that the "logo" is more than a change in scenery or a freshening up of an image. In the language of organizational change, this is called "identity direction."

We were given the name of Barb Paulini of Paulini + Nelson here in Milwaukee. Her vitae and portfolio from her client base was impressive. She asked substantial questions about our organization past and present. She attended to detail in seeking to understand our mission, vision, and values and the image that would reflect the depth of change happening in this restructure.

The construction of an "identity direction" came about in three phases. First, the focus was on concept and design. This included information gathering and the first draft of sketches. Second, she did the actual production of two graphics, similar in design but with some subtle differences. It was fascinating to see how quickly staff members gravitated toward one or the other design. The reasons behind the preferences said a lot about the perception of identity as NACC.

Around this time the Board of Directors was coming to Milwaukee for its first meeting. I had the two final designs displayed on easels and invited the Board on the tour of the office to offer an opinion
(you never put “identity direction” to a vote!). The Search Committee likewise came in for a meeting, and we garnered preferences from them as well. Again, people gravitated instantly toward one or the other with a clear opinion as to why they were inclined this way or the other. In the end, I made the choice, and interestingly, I asked Barb to combine one element from one design into the other. You have the final product in this issue.

The third phase is the production of the corporate identity materials (letterhead, stationary, envelopes, mailing labels, business cards, etc.) that is currently under way.

In giving the information of our identity direction, we obviously drew on the mission, vision, and values of the association. Some of the areas we highlighted were the move from separate regions to a sense of the unity of one national organization, a renewed emphasis on the importance of our Catholic identity, and the discipline of a clear sense of mission that provides a simplicity and focus.

The “logo” we have been using was designed at the time of the last reorganization in the late 1980’s with the then new governance model. What I didn’t notice until we began this phase of our implementation was that while the present “logo” was on our letterhead, stationary, etc., that the “logo” prior to that one was still on the certificates issued for chaplains and CPE supervisors. And when seeing the three “identity directions,” what became apparent was the way each generation of NACC members have sought to reflect the changes that each courageously embraced for their time. May our successors do the same!

**Concluding Observations**

In the midst of change, everyday life goes on. That happens in our individual lives – like my friend Michael who in the maelstrom of life-changing events still eats, gets up for work, attends to his wife, and she to him, reaches out to friends, and, well, lives. That also happens in organizational life. In the maelstrom of new Board orientation, job searches, internal staff position review, office construction, and “identity direction” processes, the national office still answers calls, mails out bills, produces Vision, prepares for World Day of the Sick, processes certification requests, plans education events, advocates with bishops, collaborates with other cognate groups, and just “does it,” i.e., the work.

A huge part of the restructuring process was the planning, design and publication of the promised NACC Calendar of Events. Julianne Dickelman and Sister Kathleen Smith, RSM, former Education
Committee members were incredible in the amount of time and energy they invested in helping produce that calendar. Along with them, the national office staff and many of you, the hosts of education events and chaplain network gatherings, were invaluable contributors during this interim.

Similarly, the certification process is presently in good form because of the excellent work of Cindy Wagner at the national office and the cooperation of the Interview Team Leaders who are coming to Atlanta and Baltimore for certification, with 18 candidates and 30 candidates, respectively. And again, I commend the patience and understanding of so many of you as we transition into this new way of conducting the certification process.

Oh, and in the middle of all this, we are moving ahead with what promises to be an exciting, and I believe historic, symposium on the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in Baltimore in May.

All and all, we are digging out of all this change in a way that I believe is faithful to the mandate that you, the membership, gave in that historic vote in favor of the restructuring. Inevitably, we have made and will make some mistakes. We have an evaluative process set in the design of this restructuring which will help us to learn and to live into even more efficient and effective ways of carrying out our mission.

As the storms of winter are left behind in the clear skies of spring, so too will the ferocity of change give way to the gentleness of a new day in the NACC. ※

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