

## Winter 2008

### Academic Calendar

**March 14**—Approval Committee for Certificate Programs quarterly meeting

**March 14-15**—Educational Strategy Committee meeting (Chicago IL)

**April 13-19**—Health Information Privacy and Security Week

**April 17**—FORE Student Scholarship application deadline

**May 12**—AOE Summer Symposium early registration deadline

**June 20**—Approval Committee for Certificate Programs quarterly meeting

**June 30**—Free Application for Federal Student Aid loan

### Welcome To *Academic Advisor*

Welcome to the premier issue of AHIMA's new quarterly education newsletter, *Academic Advisor*. The goal of this newsletter is to help HIM educators prepare the HIM professionals of tomorrow, build better curriculum, and mentor others. This first issue contains a preview of the upcoming Assembly on Education meeting in July, an update on Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education strategic goals, and an interview with a remote program director.

If there is an educator or adjunct faculty member you feel should be receiving this newsletter, please send an e-mail to [EduAccred@ahima.org](mailto:EduAccred@ahima.org) with Academic Advisor in the subject line. We would also like to hear your feedback on our first issue. Look for the next issue of *Academic Advisor* this spring.

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The AHIMA Marketing Department is pleased to sponsor the premier issue of *AHIMA Academic Advisor*.

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deadline

**July 12-16**—AOE  
Summer Symposium  
(Louisville, KY)

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### **Academic Advisor Trivia Corner**

1. How many accredited HIM programs were in the US as of December 2007?
2. What is the average HIT program increase in student enrollment from 2005–2006?
3. What is the average HIA program increase in student enrollment from 2005–2006?
4. A contract that identifies what course will be accepted from one program to another is known as what?
5. True or False: Any credentialed staff person that assists a student during a professional practice experience for at least one hour can claim one continuing education unit on their CE hours log for

### **Virtual Program Director Offers Best Practices**

Lynn Ward, RHIA, lives in Lewiston, ME, but is the HIT program director for Montana State University in Great Falls, MT. *Academic Advisor* recently spoke with Ward about her experiences as a remote program director.

"After having my second child, I decided to leave my job as HIM director and pursue teaching. I had a passion for teaching, but face-to-face classes did not provide the flexibility I needed with a young family," Ward said. "I was hired as a full-time remote faculty member to teach in the HIT and coding programs for Montana State University. The college then asked me to take over as program director. The idea of having a remote program director was not new to the college," said Ward.

#### **Tips for Success**

Running a distance program has its own unique challenges. Ward shared her tips on how to run a distance model successfully.

- keep work and family life separate
- create a virtual advising room for students including:
  - links to the program curriculum
  - advisory sheet forms to complete with updates each semester
  - advisement tracking (a drop box for advisory consults keeps track of students counseled and who has yet to be helped)
  - job postings
  - financial aid information
  - discussion board for peer-to-peer discussions about advisement
- attend campus meetings via conference call
- attend campus meetings via Webcam

Ward notes that working remotely can create a sense of isolation. "I'm looking forward to using the Webcam set up to bridge the distance gap," Ward said. "It is my hope that more distance programs will look into the potential of having faculty members and program directors work remotely. This model makes sense and shows that a totally distance program truly does work."

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student mentoring.

## Answers

1. 239
2. 13 percent
3. 19 percent
4. An articulation agreement
5. True. The one continuing education credit is awarded to all credentialed departmental staff that mentor students during professional practice experiences.

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## Financial Aid Opportunities

### Indian Health Services Loan Repayment Program

HIM students graduating from accredited associate and baccalaureate programs can apply to the Indian Health Services for a student loan repayment stipend if they are willing to work in designated healthcare sites within the Indian Health Services system. The application deadline is September 30. Visit <http://www.ihs.gov/jobscareerdevelop/DHPS/LRP/lrpsc.asp> for more information.

### Military Spouse Career Advancement Program

The Military Spouse Career Advancement Account is a new program offering spouses of active military the ability to enroll in an approved coding program or accredited HIT/HIA program and receive up to \$3,500 in tuition reimbursement to help them attain a portable career. At this time, eight military bases are participating with more to be added if the pilot is successful. Programs that are located in close proximity to these bases (and online programs) are encouraged to reach out to the military base officer in charge of base events and ask to set up a recruitment coffee to tell the spouses about your program. Visit <http://www.milspouse.org/> for more information.

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## AOE Summer Symposium Preview

### Top 10 Things to Know About the 2008 AOE Summer Symposium

1. Weekend presentations designed especially for new educators (such as the Faculty Development Institute) will have 12 presentations and workshops
2. A special session on advanced CAHIIM workshop will take place on July 13
3. The meeting takes place in **Louisville, KY, from July 12-16** at the Louisville Marriott (room rates are \$189 a night)
4. The AOE Symposium consists of 51 presenters covering eight different specialty tracks in addition to general sessions

5. There will be an exciting vendor fair showcasing the latest in HIM teaching materials
6. On July 16 meet with your special interest group or sign up for an onsite match up of new educator to experienced mentor through the COMET project
7. On July 15 participate in an elegant steamboat dinner cruise down the Ohio River
8. The member registration rate for the Faculty Development Institute is \$230 until May 12
9. The member registration fee for AOE only is \$275 until May 12
10. The member registration rate for both the Faculty Development Institute and the AOE Symposium is \$430 until May 12

With all this meeting has to offer, why wouldn't you want to be there? To view the complete agenda and register, visit [www.ahima.org/aoe](http://www.ahima.org/aoe).

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### **CAHIIM Outlines Strategic Goals**

On March 1, the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM) celebrated its third anniversary. Although AHIMA has been conducting HIM program reviews since 1943, it has always been under the umbrella of external accrediting organizations established through the American Medical Association and later the independent accrediting body for allied health education programs (the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs). While sponsored by AHIMA, CAHIIM is an independent accreditation organization with its own Board of Commissioners and responsibility for evaluation and accreditation decisions of HIM programs at the associate, baccalaureate, and graduate levels.

CAHIIM continues to refine its policies, procedures, and decision-making independence as a quality accrediting organization. In January 2008, the CAHIIM Board of Commissioners met to chart its future direction and outline operational, business, and communication plans. The resulting CAHIIM strategic goals for the

next five years are:

- earn recognition as the premier health information management and health informatics accreditation organization
- undertake the accreditation of master's degree programs in health information management and health informatics
- evaluate the possible viability of undertaking the accreditation of doctoral programs
- gain recognition from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and will then leverage this recognition in support of its intent to earn recognition as the premier HIM and HI accreditation organization
- endeavor to incorporate health informatics within its scope at every feasible level

A next step on the road to CHEA eligibility is expansion of scope for CAHIIM with the presentation for public comment of draft "Standards for the Accreditation of Master's Degree Programs in Health Information Management." The draft standards were presented to attendees at the 2007 AOE Summer Symposium and the 2007 House of Delegates. **The draft standards will be available at [www.cahiim.org](http://www.cahiim.org) on March 17 for a 60-day comment period.**

During 2008, CAHIIM will be studying health informatics graduate programs for similarities and relationships to health information management curricula. As educators know, some of our currently accredited undergraduate HIM programs as well as approved graduate programs are either officially called health informatics or incorporate informatics language within the program title. CAHIIM hopes to shed some light on the similarities and differences of health informatics in an effort to better guide the public, academic institutions, curricula, and potential students.

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## Corporate Connections Update

Corporate Connections is a program sponsored by AHIMA's education department to find new opportunities for HIM students to intern in corporations related to or providing services in the healthcare system. Student and new graduate surveys reveal that

more than 50 percent of new HIM practitioners are entering into the non-acute care market with many opting for a career in corporate settings. For this reason, it is important to provide opportunities for some of those students by alerting companies to the qualities and availability of trained HIM graduates.

To date, Corporate Connections has successfully found paid internships with the following organizations: The Veterans Affairs Healthcare System, McKesson, Care Communications, and AHIMA. We are planning future internships with HCA, Medware, Cerner, and Med-Allies. However, there is more work to be done.

### **How You Can Help**

We need your help locating the right person to contact within companies that might be interested in participating in Corporate Connections. If you have previous work contacts or are familiar with people you think may have an opportunity for Corporate Connections, please e-mail [info@healthinformationcareers.com](mailto:info@healthinformationcareers.com) with the name of the company, the contact's name and title, and a phone number or e-mail so that we can contact them and work on developing new internships for our HIM students.

For additional background on the Corporate Connections program, visit [http://library.ahima.org/xpedio/groups/public/documents/ahima/bok1\\_032186.pdf](http://library.ahima.org/xpedio/groups/public/documents/ahima/bok1_032186.pdf) for more information that you can share with anyone who may be interested in providing us with either paid or non-paid internships. If each person reached out and made initial contact with a possible intern site, we would have hundreds of leads to develop into established internships. Won't you consider helping?

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### **Hot Topic**

#### **Exploring Alternate Solutions to Contingent Faculty Issues**

This is annual program assessment report season, a time when program directors around the country consider what their program goals and action plans should be for the coming year and reflect on how well they have met their goals in the previous year.

Does your program rely on adjunct faculty? Baccalaureate health

information administration programs use adjunct faculty 50 percent of the time while associate health information technology programs rely on adjuncts 52 percent of the time. There are good business reasons to do so—it costs less to staff with adjuncts than with full time faculty and using practitioners in the community can help keep lesson plans relevant by bringing in real world know-how.

But using contingent faculty does make it more difficult to hold department meetings on topics such as curriculum reviews and updates, student advising, professional practice experience management, and program outreach. Some of the complaints from adjuncts are that there isn't time for lesson plan updates and research and that advising students is not possible within the limited time given for lecturing and running labs. Adjuncts who do want to contribute to their program's strategy sessions need to take personal time off and come in without pay to contribute to departmental meetings.

### **Searching for a Solution**

The California Community College teacher's union has come up with an innovative way to skirt these shortcomings. The collection of community colleges requires that adjunct faculty teaching at least four hours or more per term be paid one additional credit to cover things such as curriculum updates, student advising, and time to engage in departmental meetings. This provides the program with an additional 16 hours of paid adjunct time for covering these important functions beyond lecture hours.

At this time, the California model is the exception, not the rule. In most cases, adjuncts are paid only for teaching hours without any additional pay to contribute to the program's needs. As you contemplate the strategic direction of your program this year, consider whether it is time to have a talk with college administration about how to encourage contingent faculty to be more engaged with the ongoing activities in the program.

A degree in HIM is a life-changing opportunity for graduates. It can open the door to a varied and challenging career. And to that end, whatever the program director can do to provide a unique learning experience reinforced with comprehensive faculty involvement is a program goal worth keeping.

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## Academic Advisor Q&A

**Question:** What is the difference between lab time and homework assignments in an online environment?

**Answer:** Lab time usually follows lecture units and is distinct from homework time in that the student has an opportunity to interact with an instructor or lab supervisor. Typically, lab assignments are completed within a given window of time. The essential difference is that an instructor is available to guide students through the lab assignments/skill sets and to answer questions in real time or near real time.

Assignments that appear in the syllabus with set due dates are considered unsupervised homework and should not be represented as lab time. In either case (lab time or homework) a student should be able to post a question to an instructor via e-mail or through the course management system if they do not understand the assignment. That someone will reply is not the aspect that separates lab time from homework time in an online environment.

The central distinction is student/faculty interactions. Homework feedback from an instructor is reactive and the assumption is that the student is self-directed to complete the homework assignment. On the other hand, lab time reflects supervised attention for practice exercises, skill labs, and project assignments. In lab time, a set period of time has been set aside in which the student can have access to an instructor for guided or supervised instruction. This might be a four-hour window on a given day or a one-hour window that is available four days a week in which the student can do lab assignments and get help. What makes this distinctly lab time is that during that window of time, the instructor is actively engaged with student communication and feedback about the lab assignments.

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