



Interview with Cathy Smith, Immediate Past ASPE Conference Committee Chair and Long-Time ASPE Leader

By Val Fulmer, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

eNews: How did you land in the role of Conference Chair?

Cathy: I had been serving as a committee member on the Subcommittee for Conference Submission and Program Development. When Grace Gephardt took over as Conference Chair in 2011, then President Karen Reynolds asked me if I would step into the role of Conference Chair at the end of Grace's term.



eNews: Tell us about your involvement with ASPE over the years?

Cathy: I have served for 10 years with the Conference Committee in various capacities including Conference Chair (2014, 2015, 2016), Chair of the SubCommittee for Conference Submission and Program Development (2011-2013), and Chair of the International Presentations Subcommittee (2012-14). I have been involved for the almost the same length of time on the Educational Committee, including the Core Curriculum subcommittee. As part of this committee, I help to deliver ASPE Foundation courses at the ASPE annual conference. Recently, I have joined the SOP committee where we are hard at work finalizing the SOPs.

eNews: What changes have you seen in the conference since you've been in the role ?

Cathy: There are two main changes that I have seen that has built on the work of the Chairs who have come before me, and the hard work of all of the committee members, including Val Fulmer and Gina Shannon, current Co-Chairs of the Subcommittee for Conference Submission and Program Development. Starting just over three years ago ASPE hired our current professional management company KWMG. With the expertise of their meeting planners and other staff, we have steadily formalized and standardized our policies and procedures.

*To bring high quality reporting of current research, trends, techniques and information regarding SP methodology and other relevant industry articles to the attention of the membership through the web-based, bi-monthly newsletter, **ASPE eNews**.*

<http://www.aspeducators.org/>



The second main change that I have seen is in the program content of the conference where there is an increasing richness, diversity and complexity of work that mirrors the development of the scope of SP practice.

eNews: What pleases you most about the work accomplished during your time as Chair?

Cathy: There are a few things that please me. I want to stress that all of these things are the result of the work of a lot of dedicated people on the committee including:

- Formalizing and documenting the current policies and procedures of the conference planning process. This took the full three years I was Conference Chair to accomplish because of various complicating factors. Now, we have a strong base of administrative support provided by KWMMG who help us to plan and deliver the meeting and this will help to ensure a smooth succession for the current Conference Chair, Anne Chapin, and for the Conference Chairs who follow her.
- Steadily building attendance and conference revenue over the three years I chaired the committee.
- Firmly establishing “SP Day,” an initiative envisioned and developed by Past President Gayle Gliva-McConvey as part of the conference.
- Introducing a conference app, thanks to the work of Member-at-Large Jamie Pitt.
- Including wireless internet throughout the conference site.
- Archiving the conference abstracts on the ASPE website.
- Attracting increasing numbers of attendees outside of the USA to help create a truly international experience.
- Providing opportunities for strong affiliate (SSH, INACSL, SESAM, ASPIE, SIM GHOSTS) involvement through plenaries and workshops.
- Increasing the number of vendors and strengthening relationships with them by offering opportunities to interact more directly with the membership.
- Ensuring the presence of individual session facilitators, thanks to the organizational efforts of Member-at-Large Bob Bolyard.
- Planning conference venues for the next three years with the KWMMG meeting planner Heather Fritsch and VP of Finance Diane Ferguson.

*To bring high quality reporting of current research, trends, techniques and information regarding SP methodology and other relevant industry articles to the attention of the membership through the web-based, bi-monthly newsletter, **ASPE eNews**.*

<http://www.aspeducators.org/>



eNews: Is there anything else you would like ASPE members to know about the conference ?

Cathy: Everyone on the Committee is a volunteer and the paid support provided by our management group KWMG, while excellent, is only part time. Planning and delivering this conference is a time consuming, detail-oriented task that starts long before the conference.

There are so many other conferences that are available to attendees. It is incumbent upon ASPE to create a professional experience with a lot of value added so that people will choose to use their limited educational funds and time to come to our conference. In addition, the monies generated from this conference are the main way that ASPE generates revenue so it is essential the conference not only be academically successful, but also profitable. This can be a difficult juggling act. That we have been able to achieve such growth, in terms of attendees, quality, encouraging feedback and revenue is a testament to the hard work and commitment of all of the members of the conference committee and KWMG.

This is a member-driven conference. I encourage ASPE members to consider joining the Conference Committee or in fact, any one of the number of other ASPE committees. Continue to provide constructive feedback and to submit abstracts as your submissions determine the quality of the program. I am so grateful to ASPE for placing their trust in me, for the many, many relationships that I have developed, and for the invaluable personal and professional growth that I have experienced in this role.

*To bring high quality reporting of current research, trends, techniques and information regarding SP methodology and other relevant industry articles to the attention of the membership through the web-based, bi-monthly newsletter, **ASPE eNews**.*

<http://www.aspeducators.org/>