

AAHE/SOPHE Unification

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the history of the AAHE-SOPHE organizational discussions?

In 1985, AAHE President Peter Cortese and SOPHE President Larry Green and their respective leadership teams discussed the unification of SOPHE and AAHE for a stronger voice for the health education profession. The discussions continued for almost a decade through a combined SOPHE-AAHE Merger Task Force. However, multiple challenges ultimately prevented the alliance from occurring, and the task force was formally retired in 1995. Since that time, SOPHE and AAHE have collaborated on many professional development and advocacy initiatives in service of the health education profession.

2. What has been the recent movement to align SOPHE and AAHE?

In December 2008, AAHE and SOPHE leaders renewed their discussions on how to create a stronger voice for the health education profession, including the option of organizational re-alignment. On October 28, 2010, the AAHE Board of Directors voted to pursue a modified AAHE-SOPHE merger, followed by a similar vote of the SOPHE Board of Trustees on November 4, 2010. A next step for AAHE was to obtain permission to disengage from its parent organization, the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), which occurred by a unanimous vote of the AAHPERD Board of Governors on September 24, 2011.

3. What stimulated the renewed conversations now?

Building a stronger voice for the profession was the impetus for the original 1980s dialogue as well as the contemporary dialogue, which has now extended through the terms of two AAHE presidents and three SOPHE presidents. SOPHE and AAHE mission statements are almost identical. Over the years, the two organizations have provided joint leadership for a number of significant milestones that have contributed to the maturation of the health education profession. This next step in coming together will provide even greater leverage to elevate and celebrate health education research and practice.

4. What are the benefits of the SOPHE and AAHE coming together?

Among the benefits of the proposed organizational convergence are the potential to create the largest international, independent organization representing some 8,000 or more health educators; expanding the diversity of programs and services to meet members' needs; attracting a larger attendance at annual meetings for disseminating the latest health education research and practice; maximizing health educators' collaboration at the state/local levels for continuing education and advocacy; more efficient use of volunteers' time and expertise; and improved economies of scale within a single organizational infrastructure.

5. What is the timeline for moving ahead?

On September 24, 2011, the AAHPERD Board of Governors voted unanimously to approve AAHE's separation from AAHPERD in order to pursue unification of the health education profession. Following the AAHPERD Annual Convention in March 2012, there will be a one-year process to ensure the orderly withdrawal of AAHE from AAHPERD. During this time, the SOPHE and AAHE logos will be used together on any communication to the members. After the annual AAHPERD meeting in 2013, the AAHE logo and name will be officially retired.

6. What is the focus of the current discussions between AAHE and SOPHE?

Since 2008, leaders from the two groups have conducted regular conference calls, met face-to-face four times, and participated in dialogues with each organization's memberships about the strategic realignment and vision for the future. AAHE and SOPHE leaders are now exploring the structure and functioning of an organization with the combined AAHE/SOPHE membership. These discussions

include how to potentially merge AAHE and SOPHE awards and scholarships, journals and newsletters, fellowship status, and other organizational features. It is also anticipated that some AAHE leaders will run for SOPHE office in 2012. Any future major structural changes to SOPHE would be subject to a vote by the merged membership.

7. What organizational changes are happening with AAHPERD?

AAHPERD is pursuing changing its organizational structure from a federation of separate organizations to one organization focusing on physical education, physical activity and health. For more information on this issue, see www.aaahperd.org

8. How will the modified merger affect organizational representation in the Coalition of National Health Education Organizations (CNHEO)?

For the near future, no changes are anticipated in AAHE and SOPHE's representation in the CNHEO. After May 1, 2013, AAHE and SOPHE membership would be merged necessitating a reduction in the membership of CNHEO by one member. Only one individual would represent the new combined membership of the current AAHE and SOPHE organizations.

9. What do AAHE and SOPHE past presidents and leaders think about the potential modified merger?

Both SOPHE and AAHE leaders and past presidents have been very supportive of the potential to strengthen the health education profession through the modified merger. To review their statements, see "Testimonials from SOPHE and AAHE Past Presidents Regarding the AAHE-SOPHE Modified Merger".

10. Where can I go for further updates as the situation changes?

The web site of both AAHE and SOPHE will contain updates as they occur. Contacting the officers of the two organizations is also another way of securing information.