



Welcome to the second edition of the ACGC Messenger! Our goal is to keep you informed with updates on our projects throughout the year and introduce you to some of the many volunteers who help support ACGC's mission. Please contact communications committee chair, Tahnee Causey (tahnee.causey@vcuhealth.org) with any comments or suggestions for future topics.

Distance Education Task Force

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The effectiveness of distance education has been studied for over 20 years, but most institutions still must demonstrate the quality of their online education offerings, typically by meeting accreditation standards. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, several GC programs had integrated various forms of online learning strategies into their program models. Up until the early 2000s, education meant a classroom of students with a teacher who lectured or engaged students in related activities in the same location. With the advancement of the internet, this model changed completely. Since then many institutions of higher learning have incorporated different models of online education to address the needs, learning styles, and changing attitudes of students.

Distance education is defined as using technology to deliver instruction to students who are physically separated from the instructor, and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously.

Now that nearly all GC programs have had unexpected experience with online education in response to the needs of a public health crisis, there is likely to be increased uptake of this model in GC training. However, the current Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (ACGC) standards for graduate programs in genetic counseling do not provide structure around standards of quality in distance education. Additionally, some of the current standards may not apply to a distance



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education program, thereby inadvertently placing such a program at risk for noncompliance.

As a result, ACGC created a Distance Education Task Force (DETF) to evaluate the standards of accreditation and to create standards that specifically address ensuring high quality online educational models within genetic counseling training. The taskforce has been charged with:

- reviewing accreditation standards related to distance education
- identifying and describing challenges that the current standards create for programs utilizing distance education (pre-pandemic)
- drafting proposed revised standards and new standards related to distance education
- providing measures for evaluating the extent to which the standard is met
- providing recommendations for process and cadence of future distance education market assessments

The DETF convened in late 2020 with members who have experience in online education, knowledge about accreditation of distance education programs, or experience administering genetic counseling training. To date, the task force has gathered accreditation standards from other health care related programs, which will be used to inform standards for genetic counseling programs. Currently, the task force is collecting information from program directors and faculty of genetic counseling programs that use distance education modalities which will inform work on standards for distance education programs.

Communications Committee

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Programs Undergoing Reaccreditation in 2021:

Baylor College of Medicine

Boston University

Keck Graduate Institute

McGill University

University of Minnesota

University of South Carolina

University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston

University of Utah