

## ASPA Spring Conference 2025 - Speaker Biographies



**Ashley Ahearn-Szymanski** is the Associate Director of Accreditation for the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). She holds a Master of Science in Athletic Training from the University of South Florida. With more than 10 years of experience in athletic training education accreditation at the CAATE, she is committed to advancing the field by enhancing education, supporting program development, and promoting collaboration within the profession. Ashley's primary focus is on driving the growth and sustainability of residency & fellowship programs in athletic training education. Outside of her professional work, she enjoys spending time with her family, traveling, and coaching youth sports.



**Emily Albers, MPH, CPH** Emily joined the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) in 2020, serving as an accreditation coordinator and specialist before assuming her current role as Assistant Director, Accreditation Services. During her years at CEPH, Emily has assisted in the development of site visitor training sessions and has presented on CEPH accreditation criteria. She regularly provides consultation to schools and programs, as well as institutions interested in seeking first-time accreditation. Emily received her MPH in health services administration from The State University of New York at Buffalo and BS in health sciences from Sacred Heart University. She holds the Certified in Public Health (CPH) credential from the National Board of Public Health Examiners. Emily's past professional experience includes roles as a senior research support specialist, undergraduate admissions counselor, and hospital emergency room staff. She enjoys practicing yoga and doting on her two beloved cats, Apollo and Artemis.



**Teresa Brininger** is the Director of Accreditation at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) in Bethesda, Maryland. In this role, she oversees the accreditation process, ensuring that occupational therapy educational programs meet the highest standards of excellence and efficacy. Teresa brings a wealth of experience from her distinguished 26-year career in the U.S. Army, where she held a range of clinical, leadership and strategic positions. In her last assignment, as the Director of the Clinical and Rehabilitative Medicine Research Program she chaired multiple interagency strategic planning committees focused on major rehabilitation and regenerative medicine research initiatives. Teresa earned a PhD in Rehabilitation Science from the University of Pittsburgh, a Master of Business Administration from Colorado State University, and a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy from The Ohio State University.



**Angela Kennedy** is Chief Executive Officer of the Commission on Health Informatics and Information Management Education. Dr. Kennedy is a strong advocate for "Health Information Where & When You Need It." She is recognized nationally and internationally for her work in the area of consumer health advocacy and health literacy. In 2015, she testified before the US Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and was appointed by the US Secretary of Health and Human Services to the Office of the National Coordinator's (ONC) Health Information Standards Federal Advisory Committee and ONC Consumer Task Force. Dr. Kennedy served as a director on the North Louisiana Go Care Board of Directors and North Louisiana Bayou Health Board of Directors. She is also a former member of the Board of Directors of Claiborne Memorial Medical Center.

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**Mary E. Kiersma**, PharmD, PhD is the Assistant Director of Professional Degree Program Accreditation at the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE). Her roles include engaging professional degree program stakeholders, leading site visits, designing and conducting research, and speaking about ACPE activities at training sessions and professional meetings. Prior to joining ACPE, Dr. Kiersma was the Director of Assessment and Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Manchester University College of Pharmacy in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Dr. Kiersma received her PharmD from Purdue University. After working as a community pharmacist, she returned to Purdue to pursue MS and PhD degrees, with a focus on evaluation and assessment in pharmacy education.



**Ron Kruzel** has served as executive director of the Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting since 2015. A Committee on Accreditation within CAAHEP, the ARC/STSA provides accreditation services to more than 400 surgical technology and surgical assisting programs around the country. Previously he was the CEO of the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting - the credentialing board for the profession. Ron began his career as a Certified Surgical Technologist at a Level II Trauma Center, then moved into higher education as a surgical technology faculty member and program director. He earned his Master of Arts in Educational Administration from California State University, Northridge. Ron holds the Certified Association Executive Credential and volunteers on numerous professional committees for both programmatic accreditation and competency assessment.



**Crissy Lewis** is a higher-education professional with more than 15 years of experience in assessment and accreditation. In 2022, she joined the Council on Chiropractic Education as Associate Director of Accreditation, and in this role she collaborates with colleagues to facilitate program review processes and design development sessions for CCE constituents. She began her work in education as library director for a chiropractic college, but her interest in quality improvement processes ultimately led to a career in institutional effectiveness and accreditation. Crissy earned her Doctor of Education from Northeastern University, where she studied leaders' impact on employees' willingness to speak up in the workplace. In her spare time, she likes to kayak, hone her bread-baking skills, and hang out with her husband and two dogs.



**Priya Lorenzen** is an Associate Director at the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) and has been with CCNE since 2014. Prior to her time at CCNE, she completed a Master of Arts in International Affairs at American University in Washington, DC and a bachelor's degree in political science at the University of Florida.



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**Suzanne Mintz** serves as Vice President, Accreditation at AACSB International. In her role she has responsibility for the performance of AACSB's global accreditation team and leads the development and implementation of strategic and operational accreditation initiatives in support of the AACSB mission. She is responsible for overseeing strategic partnerships with other accreditation bodies, and oversees the management of AACSB's volunteer network globally, including training, engagement and recognition strategies for AACSB's volunteers. Prior to joining AACSB, Mintz worked in corporate training and development in the financial services industry, responsible for overseeing the implementation of sales and management development programs. She holds an MBA in finance and management from the University of South Florida in Tampa and is a certified Project Management Professional.



**Sam Morello DVM**, Diplomate ACVS earned her DVM from Cornell University and completed a residency in large animal surgery at the University of Pennsylvania. After over a decade as a surgery professor and adjunct at Cornell's Center for Veterinary Business and Entrepreneurship, she joined the AVMA as Associate Director of Education and Research, supporting the Council on Education and accreditation of veterinary education. She has published and lectured nationally and internationally on clinical research and organizational topics including demographics, career pipelines, compensation, faculty, and work-life integration. She has served as Assistant Director of Continuing Education for the ACVS, on the Women's Veterinary Leadership Development Initiative Board, an advisor to blendVET<sup>®</sup>, on the President's Council of Cornell Women, and with the AO Foundation.



**Todd Neuharth** currently serves as the Director of Accreditation for the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education. Before joining the CAATE, Todd served as Department Chair and Program Director responsible for achieving the initial and continuing accreditation of athletic training education programs at universities across the United States. Before that he was involved in clinical practice as both an athletic trainer at the postsecondary level and a physician assistant in private practice. Neuharth received a DPhill in epidemiology with an area of concentration in biostatistics, an MA in Health Education, BA in Biology and Health Education and a MedEx certificate.



**Keri Nunn-Ellison** is the Senior Director of the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). She holds degrees in nursing and education, including a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Management. A Certified Nurse Educator since 2010, Dr. Nunn-Ellison is dedicated to quality teaching, learning, and outcomes assessment at all levels. Before joining ACEN in 2016, she served in multiple roles at Sinclair Community College, including faculty, Associate Program Administrator for Nursing, Divisional Assessment Coordinator for Health Sciences, and chair of the college-wide Assessment Committee. She has also contributed to faculty development through presentations and publications. Dr. Nunn-Ellison previously served on the Ohio Board of Nursing's Education Advisory Board and as an ACEN peer evaluator, team chair, and Evaluation Review Panel member.

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**John Przypyszny** is a Partner at Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath and leads the firm’s education team. He is a preeminent legal authority on higher education law and a trusted advisor to clients on matters pertaining to accreditation, regulatory compliance, policy, and transactions related to higher education. With almost three decades of experience, John counsels institutions, education companies and accrediting agencies. He frequently speaks on education law issues and co-authored a compendium on distance education for the National Association of College and University Attorneys.



**Jeff Reiter** is the founder and CEO of RWK IT Services, a business-to-business IT service firm. With over 15 years of experience supporting accreditors, Jeff has helped more than 1,800 clients strengthen cybersecurity, business continuity, and disaster recovery. His team supports the daily IT needs of over 2,000 professionals. A sought-after speaker, Jeff provides actionable insights on IT management, cybersecurity, AI, and business continuity for accreditation bodies, nonprofits, and for-profit organizations. He has been featured in *InformationWeek* and *MSP Success* and serves as editor of *RWK Chicago Authority* magazine. His upcoming book, *The Cyber Playbook*, is a practical guide to cybersecurity and compliance for business leaders.



**Gina Scarboro**, D. B.A., MMSc, CAA, is the Executive Director of the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). Prior to her role as the chief staff officer for CAAHEP, Dr. Scarboro was Associate Professor and Dean for the College of Health Professions at South University. Dr. Scarboro is the prior Chair of the Association of Anesthesiologist Assistant Educational Programs, past President of the American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants (AAAA), and a former member of the Physician Assistant Committee for the Georgia Composite Medical Board. In addition to her higher education and service activities, Dr. Scarboro continues to practice as a Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant.



**Khairi Scott** is an experienced accreditation specialist with over eight years of expertise in accreditation processes. Currently, he oversees evaluator management for the Accreditation Bureau for Health Education Schools (ABHES), ensuring an effective selection, training, and oversight of evaluators. With a deep understanding of accreditation standards and compliance, Khairi is committed to maintaining excellence in educational program evaluations. If he could choose one word to describe himself, it would be “servant.” He believes we can make the world a better place through servant leadership. In his spare time, he volunteers as a Hospice Coordinator for the terminally ill. A fun fact about Khairi is that he is a die-hard Philadelphia Eagles fan and videographer for weddings, birthdays, engagements, and other special events.



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**Mark Spence** has worked in programmatic accreditation for over 20 years. He is experienced in managing volunteer services, overseeing accreditation processes for entry-level certificate programs, and coordinating the development of advanced practice doctorate accreditation. He is currently the Director of Strategic Initiatives at the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences.



**Kristen Varol** has worked at CEPH since 2010 providing consultation to and staffing accreditation reviews for schools and programs across the US and internationally. She is the primary staff contact for units interested in pursuing initial accreditation and those located outside of the US. Kristen supports internal consistency in accreditation reviews across a staff of nine site visit coordinators. She has presented at professional meetings about accreditation best practices and CEPH accreditation criteria, particularly in relation to MPH curricula. Kristen received her Master of Public Health degree in health behavior and health promotion from Ohio State University. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism from California State University, Long Beach.



**Heidi E. Vellenga, PhD**, is the Executive Director of the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), a specialized USDE-recognized accrediting agency for English language programs and institutions in the US and internationally. CEA accredits over 300 programs and institutions focused on English language instruction. Heidi has over two decades of experience in ESL teaching and language program administration and holds an MA in Applied Linguistics & TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), a PhD in Applied Linguistics. Vellenga has served on the board of EnglishUSA, as awards committee chair for the TESOL International Association, and is on the ASPA Board of Directors. Dr. Vellenga regularly presents at national and international conferences on topics including accreditation, instructional effectiveness, and language program administration.