

LEADERSHIP PAGE



Uncovering the Real Power and Value Behind ACC Membership



Richard J. Kovacs, MD, FACC, *President, American College of Cardiology*

As a longtime leader of the American College of Cardiology (ACC)—from Governor of the ACC Indiana Chapter, to Board of Governors Chair, to President—I have often been asked about the benefits and value of membership in the College.

When answering, it is easy to go straight to all of the tangible benefits, including the *JACC* Journals, clinical guidelines, advocacy, and 70 years of state-of-the-art education. These, for the most part, are quantifiable benefits that can be assigned monetary value or illustrated through policy changes or laws.

While these benefits should in no way be minimized, the real value and power of the ACC lies in the professional bond that is formed between its members from the day we take our pledges as new Fellows and Associates. From that moment on, we are something bigger than ourselves. We are one family, one team, one College, diligently working to improve care, push back barriers when needed, and share what we learn and know with each other.

I have personally experienced the power and value of ACC membership countless times throughout my career. One of my earliest memories involves former ACC president, Richard Chazal, MD, MACC. While a Fellow at Indiana University, Chazal ran into a relatively green intern (me) on night call. He freely shared his knowledge about acute heart failure management and taught me that colleagues do not berate a mistake; they use the opportunity for improvement. Ironically, it was Chazal who called me many years later to tell me I had been selected to serve as ACC Vice President.

I have also had the privilege of working directly with 5 inspiring and unique ACC presidents in my own practice—Charles Fisch, MD, MACC, Suzanne B. Knoebel, MD, MACC, Borys Surawicz, MD, MACC, John F. Williams, Jr., MD, MACC, and Douglas P.

Zipes, MD, MACC. Being active in the ACC was an expectation—from Fisch and every Krannert leader since. Each recognized the inherent value of active participation in the College and encouraged those who followed to not stand on the sidelines, but share talents and expertise with others.

When I was unsure about my future in ACC leadership, John Gordon Harold, MD, MACC, shared his perspectives and insights during a walk down the promenade in San Diego while we were there for ACC.15. Similarly, Thad Waites, MD, MACC, has taught me so much about how to represent cardiology as a high calling, and has remained a dear friend and constant source of support through thick and thin. I am president today, in part, because of their encouragement.

On the personal front, when my own 99-year-old mother needed compassionate care, John Schaefer, MD, FACC, and his team were there to care for her.

It is experiences like these that make the College a true professional home. The collegiality, teamwork, and unity around a common mission, vision, and shared values are at the core of what makes the ACC great. Strong teams and families have similar characteristics, including commitment and trust, good communication, diversity of capabilities, and an ability to work together and adapt. All of these factors together are critical to success, and all of these factors can be found within the ACC.

Over the next year, my primary goal is to leverage the inherent power and value of the ACC in delivering on our new 5-year Strategic Plan—a plan that is focused on creating actionable knowledge; increasing the quality, value, and equity of cardiovascular care; and ensuring the ACC of 2019 thrives now and into the future. Achieving the goals outlined in the plan has the potential to increase the value—both tangible and intangible—by leaps and bounds.

What will it take? We must continue the fundamental work of increasing diversity and inclusion in the College and in the profession. Our diversity in roles, personal and professional experiences, and thoughts and perspectives make us stronger and more effective in improving the lives of patients who cross our paths every day. Increased diversity and inclusion will allow us to be more aware of the signs of member health and member burnout and even better advocates for ourselves, our patients, and our profession.

We must also continue to ensure that our professional home is a place where members feel safe—safe to practice cardiology, to perform research, and to teach the next generation. Safe to express opinion, challenge the status quo, push back on barriers, and be different. Similarly, we must also continue to adapt. Adapting to external factors like changing government policies, patient

demographics, new technologies and therapies, learning methods, generational expectations, and more is critical.

Over the next year and beyond, I challenge new and seasoned fellows and associates to imagine a world where knowledge and innovation optimize cardiovascular care and outcomes. Take advantage of the bond we share by virtue of being part of a global team dedicated to transforming cardiovascular care and improving heart health. Share your talents and ideas, grow your strengths, explore new competencies, and recruit others to the team. This is your College!

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Dr. Richard J. Kovacs, American College of Cardiology, 2400 N Street NW, Washington, DC 20037. E-mail: president@acc.org.