

David Seal, Ph.D.
10th AAHB President (2010-2011)

When did you attend your first Academy annual meeting? 2000 I believe. It was the second annual conference in Napa.

What attracted you to AAHB? The interdisciplinary and scientific meritocracy emphasis. Longer time allotments for speakers in which they could talk about programs of research not just single studies.

What do you value about the Academy and why did you choose to be involved as President? The scientific rigor of presentations is what I value. I chose to become involved as President so as to aim to institutionalize my vision for the Academy. Also to serve as a transition between the founding members and the next generation of leadership as the first President who was not an original member.

What was your vision for AAHB when you assumed the role of President? Multiple goals. One was to institutionalize organizational opportunities to develop the next generation of AAHB leaders and health behavior scientists. I take pride in seeing so many people that developed within AAHB workgroups and committees through mechanisms we established who now serve as the leadership of the organization. Two was to develop a mentoring program that paired junior and senior members. Along with Lisa Benz-Scott we received NIMHD funding to establish the Kellogg-AAHB mentoring program which continues successfully as the AAHB mentoring program of which I continue to be involved as a mentor. Third, was to increase focus on diversity within the Academy. It took five years, but we now have the Diversity Committee officially recognized by the Board under Lisako McKyer's leadership. Finally, continuing the tradition of scientific rigor and meritocracy.

What was your biggest accomplishment as President? Providing needed leadership around the immigration controversy in Tucson that threatened to create great division in the Academy. In the end, my recommendation to move the conference was one of most difficult professional decisions I have ever made. But it was the right one. And the highly successful conference that year with one of the highest attendance numbers and the most diversity of attendees ever in AAHB reinforced my belief in the recommendation. And regardless of whether people agreed with my decision, I hope they appreciate the thoughtful, transparent, and inclusive feedback process I went through to reach my recommendation.

Where do you see AAHB in the next 10 years? Hopefully, still focused on its scientific meritocracy and rigor in the conference program and membership expectations. Also, hopefully an Academy that has increased its emphasis on diversity in health research and practice that makes a diverse membership feel welcomed.

Do you have any advice for students and early career researchers? Stay focused on your career goals. But make sure they are your career goals. If you are not passionate

about your work, academia can wear you out. Also, take advantage of opportunities to be mentored and to network. You never know whom your next employer, your next colleague, or your next friend might be if you do not connect with colleagues.