

Confessions by Beth Booher (Membership Chair and former Director for the LPC):

Our Local Program Council (LPC) has partnered with the Baylor University Robbins Institute for Health Policy and Leadership for the last three years to host a networking social in January to provide a venue for students to interact with seasoned healthcare executives. Our most recent event was held Thurs, Jan 28<sup>th</sup> at The Backyard in Waco. Although there was a great turnout of Baylor graduate students either in their first year of the MBA program or in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year returning from their residencies, there were only a few of us working healthcare executives present.

Now here comes the confession part... it was at this event where I realized just how tired and possibly cynical I have become talking about the healthcare industry. Sad, but true. The students were asking great questions and I could see the eagerness in their eyes and feel their positive energy. But I'm afraid I might have been a little too honest with them. So, as I was driving home (stuck in I-35 traffic for two hours) it gave me time to reflect. I wondered "when did I lose my positive energy?" Then I thought, "Is everyone just this tired, like me?" Surely, I can't be the only one that feels this way. Right?

We've seen some incredible changes in the healthcare industry since I was in grad school in 1992-93. We've struggled through policy and payor changes, migrating to EMRs, and experienced or witnessed several mergers, acquisitions, and closures. During this time, we've also witnessed a possible decline in participation from senior executives in our local ACHE Chapters. At first I thought it was simply because senior executives are just truly busy people. But after spending time with these graduate students and young early careerists trying to break into the field, I thought, "Who is telling them the truth?" Remember when you were in school and learned theory only to learn the hard way how to put it into practice? It isn't always as easy as the text book or case study made it seem.

Now, I truly believe most of us are in this healthcare field because we truly care about other human beings. If we didn't we could certainly use our financial, managerial, and planning skills in some other industry. But that doesn't make healthcare any easier. At one point at this social I was asked the poignant question of why join ACHE. Now as the Membership Chair, I have the organization membership documents and the 30 second elevator speech prepared, but when I looked at this new healthcare executive I knew I had to be honest with him. My answer... because this work is hard! We need a support system where you can share stories, get fresh education, and simply support one another. I'm friends with other healthcare executives not just in my own organization, but from my neighboring competitors as well but when we get together at ACHE events, the stories are all very similar. And at the end of the day, it helps to know that someone else out there is struggling with the same issues, such as: ICD-10 conversions, third party payor contracts, physicians (and all that goes with dealing with physicians), patient complaints, management issues, etc. WHEW!

So... to the great students of Baylor, I apologize if I was a little too honest in sharing what healthcare is really like in the trenches, day in and day out. I hope that doesn't change your course into entering this field. It is still an incredibly rewarding experience.

To other healthcare executive, I need your help! Please come to our events and share with the students and early careerist your stories of success and growth in this industry. And, help build this support system that we all need.

To those considering joining, just jump in! Here is where you will find life-long friends and a professional network where you will be able to lean on for your entire career. Believe me, you will need it!

Thanks to Paloma Pearson and Tom Haines for setting up the event. Thanks to all who participated. Now... my confession is done!

If I can help in any way, please feel free to contact me directly at: 254-680-1112 or [beth.boohar@BSWHealth.org](mailto:beth.boohar@BSWHealth.org).