

John Sullivan, DDS, AAACD

a) Why are you applying for this position?

COVID has changed our Academy. Our membership is down, and what was important to our membership a few years ago may no longer apply. But one of our core values is education with pursuit of Accreditation and Fellowship being what sets us apart from other organizations. I am concerned of what will come of our Accreditation and Fellowship with the rise of the American Board of Cosmetic and Esthetic Dentistry. I have seen member state they are Diplomats of the ABCED before they mention their Accreditation. I don't want to see this educational standard "cheapened" and want to be sure that our Academy continues to be the leader in dental education and philanthropy.

b) What is your vision for the future of the AACD?

More than lofty membership numbers, or using our Academy's name to get patients through the door, before all of those things, there was Education. There has always been the opportunity for any member to gauge their skill, their talent, and their dreams against a standard. That is what has set us apart from every other esthetic group. It's never been about who you knew, or where you're from, it's about what you can show you can do. As a friend once said, Accreditation doesn't mean you're the best dentist in the world, it means you did the five cases above a standard that can be quantified. I've seen too many patients with "cosmetic" dentistry who don't even know what is possible. It should be our mission to show patients what natural esthetics looks like, and what commitment and dentist takes to deliver that care consistently. I truly believe that once a patient understands that commitment, they will not settle for less. We need to market our difference to the dental profession and the public at large.

c) Have you served on boards in the past? If so, what have you learned from this experience?

I have served ten years on the Board of Directors as a General Member, an Accredited Member, and on the Executive Committee as Vice-President, President-Elect and President. I have served as a liaison for the BOD to both the ABCD and the AACDCF. I have also served on the Professional Education Committee as a Co-Chair, so I feel I know all aspects of the Academy and how each part is affected by the others.

d) We are interested in learning about your leadership skills and organizational style. Tell us what we could expect and how you work with others. Be specific as possible.

In my practice, I believe in hiring motivated people, giving them proper instruction and information, and then get out of their way and offer feedback when they request it or it becomes obvious, they need it. As my mentor Dr. Pride always said, "Inspect what you Expect." I have a tendency to micro-manage, so I keep that in check especially when leading a project. I believe in having things come in on time and on budget.

e) Serving the AACD requires people to take on projects and see them to completion, often working with others to accomplish specific goals. Tell us about your accomplishments and approach to fulfilling obligations.

Working within your own practice is a different beast than working within the Academy. We are the kings or Queens of our own castle, so we can change policy at our own whim. But while on a Board, we are much more like a House of Congress, where we need to listen to others, understand their point of view, before we talk about our point of view. The best Boards I worked on showed respect to one another, assumed good intentions, and could come to a mutual decision that they felt would be in the Academy's and member's best interest. One such decision was when the Board of Governors became the ABCD years ago. There was heated discussion, with both sides pretty entrenched in their feeling. The decision passed by one vote, and we all got behind the change and moved it forward, instead of sniping and complaining behind each other's back. It was decided it was best for the Academy, so let's move on.

f) The AACD offers our members a superb opportunity to form friendships which could be brought into conflict when policy decisions or approaches must be addressed. Tell us about how you might balance those friendships when policy or ethical issues create such a conflict.

During my years on the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee, there have been instances where as a Board we had to correct a conflict of interest with the President using his position to recommend a product. We clarified the policies so we would not have leadership be put in a position whereas they are representing the entire Academy in recommending a product. As President, I had to consider a person running for a leadership position who had a serious crime charged against him. We talked with the candidate, and suggested that they step back from running until the matter was resolved, so as to not embarrass the candidate of the Academy.

g) What do you bring to this position that is unique or distinctive? How will you make a difference?

Experience and tribal knowledge. I was probably involved in a lot of the decisions affecting our Academy, both good and bad. I know first-hand the players involved, and the history behind the decisions. I am open to new ideas, and can point out what ideas have been tried before, and why they may not have worked at that time but may be applicable now. I know how important it is to work as a team with mutual respect, and how difficult it can be to succeed when one group needs to be right. I don't need to be right to succeed.

h) Please give us an idea of where you see your interests and expertise supporting the advancement of the AACD Strategic plan and reflecting an alignment with the Academy's core purpose.

I've always seen core purposes of the Academy being education and philanthropy. I've pursued Accreditation and am now pursuing Fellowship to hold myself to the highest levels of education that this Academy can offer. In the form of Philanthropy, I have actively supported the Give Back a Smile program, and believe I have restored more patient smiles within the program than any other member. I have given hundreds of hours of volunteer time to help and represent our Academy, and as a member of a volunteer group, I've tried to consistently walk the talk.

i) Ultimately, the purpose of serving the AACD is to support our membership. Tell us how you see yourself relating to the membership and forming a bridge between the Board and our members.

I think the true leaders of our Academy are those who have taken on the challenge of Accreditation and Fellowship. I'm yet to find an Accredited member or Fellow who will not drop whatever they are doing to offer guidance, advice, and their knowledge to another member. Being President of the organization is not nearly as important to being a mentor to a member. I would like to see the mentorship program expand where every member who wants help will have a place to get their answers filled, either using the MyAACD Network to talk directly with Accredited members, or AACD Central to learn methods to make the process easier to achieve.

j) What unique ideas do you have to build and grow our membership in today's climate?

Today's climate is like nothing any of us have ever experienced before. We first have to decide what our Academy should look like going forward. Are we going to be big, be small, be elite, or all inclusive? There's no Makeover Show that's going to make us the most exciting kid in town, but there is an Accreditation Process that we can promote in two ways, to dental professionals who want to be their best, and understand that average is never going to be enough. We won't attract everyone, but we can grow to an Academy of 5000 members just by promoting Accreditation and the quality that comes with it. That can be done by enlisting membership, and especially the Accredited Members to actively recruit new member in their areas. The growth of small study groups will work with this COVID time frame we live in, and could easily be held on Zoom calls. Secondly, patients can learn that "quality isn't cheap and cheap isn't quality," so they will seek out Accredited members to have their treatment done. The insurance model is dying in dentistry, and it's our responsibility to be there for them with office membership plans to keep them safe, stable and smiling.

k) Please list any leadership courses or webinars taken. Leadership training is highly recommended

I have attended most if not all of the leadership courses offered to membership during my tenure in the Academy, and have trained extensively with a person who I feel is one of the top leadership instructors in all of Dentistry, Dr. James Pride of the Pride Institute.

l) What else should we know in order to consider you as an applicant for this position?

This Academy is my home. It welcomed me in 1999, and has been the driving force in my growth as a dentist. Accreditation was a massive goal for me, and after achieving that level, I feel I took my foot off the gas and got complacent. I'm pursuing Fellowship now not for the achievement, but to stay focused and dedicated to the level of excellence that is personified by this Academy. This Academy set the standard, I want to continue to live up to that standard as long as I continue to practice and teach. I am taking part in the AACD Residency Program to offer to mentor the younger dentists that will take part and help to jump start their careers.

m) Has any dental licensing board taken adverse action against your license or is there any action pending? If yes, please explain

No

n) Have you ever been convicted of a felony or are there any charges pending or under investigation? If yes, please explain

No