Proposed ACPE-APC Merger FAQs

1. What is the proposed ACPE-APC merger?
After decades of collaboration and a few years of negotiations, the Boards of Directors of the ACPE: The Standard for Spiritual Care and Education and the Association of Professional Chaplains met concurrently on March 18, 2021 at 10:00am EDT/9:00am CDT to entertain a motion that the organizations officially merge. Both organizations approved the motion.

Now ACPE members and APC members will have the opportunity to vote on the proposed merger. The vote will be conducted electronically. Polls will be open from July 6, 2021 to July 26, 2021.

2. What is driving the desire to merge?
While ACPE and APC have several specific reasons for the merger, the leadership of both associations believe we are better together: better for our members and better for the people we serve. Here are some of the reasons:

I. First, ACPE and APC members are asking for more robust advocacy on their behalf with their institutions, with state and federal agencies, and with partner associations and entities. An organization of 8000-9000 members will have much greater standing to affect the changes our members wish to see in their industries.

II. Second, when ACPE and APC were formed, the primary concern was not the preparation and ongoing development of professional spiritual care providers; it was the formation of clergy (and overwhelmingly Christian pastors and priests). We are a much more multi-faith world and profession today. In addition, as congregational leadership has declined for decades, chaplaincy and professional spiritual care has steadily grown.

III. Third, this merger will position the new organization to help shape the emerging need for new kinds of religious leadership, forms which will likely dominate the religious landscape in the next decade.

IV. Fourth, the world is not what it was when these organizations were formed: both the world at large and the world of spiritual care. In 1968, two organizations provided clinical pastoral education. In 2020, we have identified 19 different organizations offering something called CPE or CPT. In addition to APC, we have identified 28 other organizations that “certify” chaplains, though some require only a small payment with a completed application. Not only is the market more competitive, but the marks of
quality are also more difficult to distinguish.

V. Fifth, the competitive market has also created significant confusion for students and those interested in pursuing careers as professional, certified spiritual care providers. A merger would allow our organizations to provide a pipeline from those who first come into CPE to those who are certified as chaplains to those who are certified as educators. We also will bring the skills and resources of the former AAPC counselors and psychotherapists into the mix, creating a remarkable reserve of professional development opportunities for all members.

VI. Sixth, professional spiritual care is having a moment, one we did not anticipate when these conversations started. The pandemic has raised awareness of the essential services chaplains provide, the importance of spiritual care in private practices as well as congressional leadership, and the emerging places where spiritual care professionals are being called to serve in communities. The new organization will be better positioned to help support, encourage, and innovate in these areas.

VII. Finally, it just makes sense. As a unified organization, we can take advantage of opportunities that currently are beyond the reach and scope of either organization independently. We are better, stronger, and more robust together.

3. What are the benefits of this merger?
   I. We can serve the needs of members across their careers, from novices to seasoned experts, from front-line workers to senior administrators.
   II. We expect to deepen collegial relationships between students, chaplains, clergy, counselors, psychotherapists, and CPE educators, fostering an appreciative culture committed to excellence in spiritual care.
   III. We expect to build greater collegiality between professional spiritual care providers in a variety of settings.
   IV. We expect to seed new settings where spiritual care can flourish.
   V. We expect to offer a broad range of research-based professional development opportunities, many in partnership with graduate learning institutions.
   VI. We expect to position the new organization as the leader and standard within the profession of spiritual care.
   VII. We expect to be the primary source for educators, media, administrators, and other associations about professional spiritual care.
   VIII. We expect to serve much like an association management company for smaller and newer spiritual care organizations, providing them with professional services while also weaving them into the larger advocacy and professional development efforts of the new organization.

4. Who initiated this merger and which association will lead?
   This merger is envisioned as what organizational designers call a “merger of equals.” We are both healthy. We are both dominant forces in the field. We rely on one another at a variety of levels. The initial board structure is intended to capitalize on this “merger of equals,” assuring both groups have the same number of seats as we move towards greater integration of work, processes, and influence in the professions of spiritual care.

5. What are the financial conditions of both organizations?
   A consultant affiliated with both associations conducted a comprehensive financial due diligence report of both associations. In short, both have steady, growing revenue streams, well-managed
expenses, and several months of cash reserves. In other words, both organizations are financially healthy and can approach this process from a place of financial strength.

We also recognize that our members face increasing financial constraints with the loss of travel support, no support for dues, even reduced leave time. We believe the merged entity can help provide more opportunities and support as well as advocacy for members that help advance the larger profession.

6. Why are CASC/ASCC, NACC and NAJC not merging with ACPE and APC
   - CASC/ASCC is not prepared to move forward within the merger due to the priorities that are in motion for the up-coming years. Throughout merger discussion additional complexities were identified around provincial and federal governments, as well as the uniqueness of Canadian issues and bi-lingual culture. CASC/ACSS is firmly committed to this working relationship.
   - NACC leaders recognized that NACC needed to remain its own 501(3) organizational entity within the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that founded NACC, under whose umbrella NACC keeps its nonprofit status, and from whom it receives approval of Certification competencies and procedures. Thus, this relationship remains essential to NACC. NACC remains committed to ways it can partner with ACPE and APC on initiatives, exploring ways to share services, along with continuing our work on and adherence to our common qualifications and competencies for board certified chaplains as well as to our Common Code for Professional Ethics.
   - Currently, NAJC is a member of the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies, which requires them to maintain a corporate structure specifically as a Jewish organization. Their partnership with the Network serves as a vital force for maintaining and supporting the goals of NAJC as a resource for Jewish chaplaincy as well as promoting their capacity to support all in need of Spiritual Care across all faith traditions in all areas where Chaplains have an impact. NAJC anticipates a strong ongoing relationship with the new organization, as it has enjoyed with ACPE and APC. NAJC looks forward to continuing partnering with ACPE and APC and engaging in many joint ventures to build, grow and advocate for chaplaincy.

7. What happens to the ACPE Foundation?
   The ACPE Foundation will continue as a 501c3. While this has not been finalized, the ACPE team hopes all assets/reserves can be consolidated here, with appropriate subaccounts to recognize the origins and restrictions on funds. The current Type1 designation would need to be reassigned to the new organization.

8. When do the changes take effect?
   If both associations approve the merger, each organization will select representatives to comprise an initial board of the new organization, divided equally between APC and ACPE members. The initial board’s first responsibilities will be to select a name, establish membership categories and budgets, and hire executive leadership. Our consultants advised us the merger can take three to five years to complete.

9. What is the name of the new organization?
   The initial board of the new organization will be responsible for establishing a new name, articles of incorporation, bylaws, and governance.
10. Which executive(s) will lead the combined organization?
The initial board of the new organization will be responsible for hiring the executive leadership of the new organization.

11. Where will the new organization be based?
This will be determined by the board of the new organization.

12. When will we vote?
Members will vote electronically. Polls will be open from July 6, 2021 to July 26, 2021.

13. If I hold membership in both associations, am I able to vote on each association’s ballot?
If you hold membership in both associations, you are entitled to vote in each association’s ballot.

14. If ACPE and APC merge, will I still need to pay “double” dues?
This will be one of the first tasks of the new board: to determine membership categories and pricing. One key hope is that membership categories are such that individuals are not paying multiple fees to multiple groups but will have a clear and simple annual dues structure.

15. If ACPE and APC merge, are they creating a monopoly?
No, as mentioned in question two, there are 19 different organizations offering something called CPE or CPT, and at least 28 other organizations that “certify” chaplains.

16. How will this impact the Certification Process of ACPE and APC?
ACPE Accreditation and Certification would function much as they do now as commissions, though under the common 501c3 as a “subsidiary” or “division” of the new organization. ACPE will be the name of the “division” or “subsidiary” that houses Accreditation and Educator Certification. It will maintain the current ACPE 501c3 identity to prevent disruption with the US Department of Education, CMS, and other major partners.

The Board of Chaplaincy Certification Inc. (BCCI) will continue to operate as a 503c6 affiliate of the new organization, as it does currently for APC. A 501c6 is required by the tax code for certification. It will have a commission and board of directors (currently the same as the APC board) as required by law. It will house chaplain certification.

Similarly, ACPE’s Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy program and certification would continue to operate as its own “subsidiary” or “division.”

17. If ACPE and APC merge, are they creating a conflict of interest because one organization will provide the required education and BCCI certification?
No, as mentioned in question 16, the certification processes will be maintained as separate “subsidiaries” or “divisions.”

18. How can I get more information?
ACPE and APC will publish a series of interviews with past and current leaders. ACPE and APC will also host weekly Q&A sessions and multiple town halls leading up the vote in July. You can also email ACPE at ACPE-APCmerger@acpe.edu and APC at