

**THROUGH THE YEARS . . . AAHE, HOUSING PROBLEMS AND  
CHANGE: PERSPECTIVES ON ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, RESEARCH  
AND EXTENSION**

**Introduction to Invited Papers**

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**1965: The Founding of the Association**

In November 1965, the "Improvement of Instruction in Housing in Land Grant Colleges and Universities" working group met in Columbia, Missouri for its annual conference. One result was the adoption of the Constitution which founded The American Association of Housing Educators. When the Association again met in Columbia in October 1990, it was to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the American Association of Housing Educators.

The founding meeting followed, by only two months, the establishment of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which was created when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Housing and Community Development Act (P.L. 89-117) on September 9, 1965. The creation of the cabinet-level department resulted from recognition of the complex interrelationships among rapid urban growth and housing and community problems. Just as the depression of the 1930s led the federal government to take an active part in housing, the pulling together of programs around the core of the previously existing Housing and Home Finance Agency provided an opportunity to develop integrated approaches for addressing the nation's housing problems as a part of President Johnson's pursuit of the Great Society.

Similarly, an integrated set of goals was developed to guide the American Association of Housing Educators. The broad nature of these goals was revealed in the preamble to the Constitution, adopted November 5, 1965:

The American family needs housing information that will enable its members to attain optimum satisfaction. This organization shall be concerned with problems connected with housing the American family and the promotion of education and research for their solution. (*Proceedings*, 1965)

The diversity of housing professionals that joined together with this shared concern included home economists, architects, interior designers, sociologists and urban planners. Their expertise provided the basis for an integrated approach to addressing housing and community problems.

These two new organizations--AAHE and HUD--interacted, even at the founding conference. The educators' keynote speaker was Mrs. Marie McGuire, then Commissioner of the U. S. Public Housing Administration. She told conference participants, "The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 provides new tools to help communities develop a program best suited to their needs and the upgrading of the environment" (Change Urged, 1965). The Association responded at the conclusion of the conference by adopting a resolution that supported programs of the department and resolved

. . . that the American Association of Housing Educators urge the United States Department of Housing and Urban Affairs to encourage and expedite research at

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local, state and federal levels which is focused on housing improvement for the families and single citizens of our nation . . . (*Proceedings*, 1965)

Consistent with the founding of an organization, officers were elected and committees were appointed to develop the program of work and carry out the business of the new organization. The first official conference was planned for the University of Illinois in 1966.

### **1990: The Silver Anniversary Conference**

When the Association was invited to return to Columbia, Missouri for its 1990 annual conference, some aspects of the organization and its environments were the same, but others had changed. During the 25-year period, conferences were held each year at various locations throughout the United States, and scores of housing professionals had served as officers or on committees under the direction of 25 presidents. A quarterly professional refereed journal, *Housing and Society*, was in its seventeenth yearly volume, and *In House*, the Association newsletter, was also being published four times a year.

Over the years, the committee structure established by the 1965 Constitution had undergone periodic revisions including establishment of a separate committee for Extension. In 1986, the Instruction Committee was renamed Academic Programs and was converted, along with the Research and Extension Committees, to a Professional Section with chairs elected by the total membership. Program development has been accomplished via these committees--now sections--for all 25 years of AAHE's existence.

The theme of the 1990 Annual Conference was designated by the Conference Program Committee as "Silver Anniversary--Golden Opportunity for Housing Educators." In support of this theme, a "Founders' Day" panel presentation by distinguished AAHE members addressed the theme "Through the Years: AAHE, Housing Problems, and Change." Members of the panel were selected to celebrate AAHE's 25 years by highlighting changes in housing and its environments and describing actions taken by AAHE members from the perspective of each respective section.

Founding member Dr. Glenda Pifer, 1973-1974 President of AAHE and program chair for the first association conference in Illinois, presented a brief overview of factors which have both affected and effected change in American housing since 1965. Pifer identified major changes in industrialization, costs, characteristics, demographics, energy and environmental concerns, and public policy responses. She also presented the challenge of housing problems to be addressed by the remaining panel members.

Betty Jo White, 1981-1982 President and organizer of the 1990 workshop "Housing and Equipment Curricula in the Year 2000," discussed changes in academic housing programs and responses by AAHE academic section members. White described changes from the individual consumer orientation in instruction to an interdisciplinary approach and an internationalization of instruction. She described changes in teaching methods and the emergence of housing policy and political/legal topics during the 1970s.

Margaret Weber, an active housing researcher, provided a review of research conducted by AAHE members that was presented at AAHE annual meetings. This research was first published as *Proceedings*, and later as *Refereed Conference Papers*. Weber stated that emphasis on research design became apparent after initiation of the *Journal of Housing Educators* and continued when the journal was renamed *Housing and Society*. Weber summarized the 2 1/2 decades of research by topic, by research design and by theoretical framework, including a discussion of the increasing use of theory for framing problems for research.

Lastly, Joe Wysocki, 1982-1983 President, discussed Extension programs from 1965 through 1990. Wysocki described shifts in Extension program content and a broadening of audiences and methods in the United States, including the change from individual consumers to groups sharing common needs and community decision makers.

### Invited Panel Presentation Papers

The Anniversary panelists were invited to present their revised papers for publication in *Housing and Society*. The four papers that follow reflect the time constraints which were imposed by the conference program and the decision of the authors to make revisions in their remarks following the conference presentation.

#### After 1990: The Next Twenty-Five Years

As with other organizations, AAHE faces challenges and changes as members consider ideas and resources to address in the future. During the year preceding the Anniversary Conference, several challenges were presented to the Association and its members.

One set of issues to be faced was presented to housing professionals at the 1990 "Housing and Equipment Curricula in the Year 2000" workshop. The workshop, cosponsored by AAHE, The Housing Equipment Educators Association and the Housing, Home Furnishing and Equipment Section of the American Home Economics Association, included discussion of the role of housing in higher education. Dean Francille Firebaugh challenged participants to answer twelve questions, which included the use of resources in higher education, theory building, and the recognition and contributions of housing professionals to our society (White, 1990).

The workshop was significant in that members of three national organizations convened to address problems critical to continued academic and work environments of housing professionals. The potential of a coalition to address common problems was recognized by some participants, who also identified the existence of three organizations with their respective loyalties and special interests as a barrier to coalition activity.

One consequence of celebrating an anniversary is a desire to define goals and actions for the future. Thus, it is not surprising that during the year preceding the Anniversary Conference, a new Long Range Plan was developed by an AAHE Long Range Planning Committee. In the manner of previous plans, the Board of Directors and members of the Association reviewed the plan at each of the respective section meetings; and following discussion of the recommended changes, it was enthusiastically adopted by the membership attending the Anniversary Conference. The Plan will serve as a guide for program direction and activity for the next five years. Four goals with accompanying actions were articulated for housing education, housing research, professional development and communication with other organizations (*Long Range Plan*, 1991).

A continuing challenge facing AAHE housing professionals is that of public housing policy. In 1990, members were reminded of the 1965 Resolution of the Association to "support . . . programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and encourage and expedite research at local, state, and federal levels which is focused on housing improvement" (*Proceedings*, 1965). An examination of issues of *In House* since 1978 reveals many news items designed to alert AAHE members to federal and state legislative activity of policy formation and implementation. Publication of these items took place mostly before 1986, when an AAHE reorganization merged the Liaison and Legislative committees resulting in a single Public Relations committee. These new committees' responsibilities, now defined in the *AAHE Policy Handbook* (Thee, 1992-93), focus largely on liaison-type activities, at the expense of public policy concerns.

The need exists for more AAHE members to make a commitment to understanding and developing housing policy in the United States. The founding of AAHE occurred 25 years ago at the time of a national commitment to address housing policy issues in an integrated and interdisciplinary way. Now as AAHE enters the second 25 years of its existence, this important commitment needs to be renewed.

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