The Value of SH&E Education & Research

By Michael W. Thompson, CSP
Education, continuing professional development and research is the backbone of the SH&E profession. Our Society’s Strategic Goal 5, “Gather, encourage and participate in development of the body of knowledge relevant to the profession,” prompts us to take action. In addition to the obvious stated goal, there is an implicit understanding that causes all of us to be accountable for nurturing future generations of SH&E professionals. In alignment with our Society’s Vision and Mission, education and research contributes to the growing body of knowledge and supports the long-term value and importance of quality SH&E delivery to workers, employers and communities. The Academics Practice Specialty’s publication, the Journal of Safety, Health and Environmental Research (JSHER), serves as a premier online resource of peer-reviewed theoretical and empirical articles of interest to SH&E students and educators. I encourage you to read through this publication and to consider your role and subsequent actions in the context of the importance of education and research.

New SH&E practices, policies and programs cannot exist without sound science to support them, and sound science cannot exist without the work of SH&E students and researchers. ASSE offers many opportunities for students and researchers to acquire the knowledge, training and skills they need to perform their jobs responsibly. For example, ASSE’s Educational Standards Committee establishes the ABET safety curriculum criteria for associate, baccalaureate and master degree programs in safety and helps colleges and universities develop accredited safety degree programs. ASSE Foundation helps train a new generation of SH&E educators to pursue answers to SH&E challenges at the worksite. Government agencies like the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) routinely launch new initiatives to improve workplace safety and health, but for these initiatives to take root, we know that they must be data-driven, peer reviewed, published and based on proven research. For example, NIOSH’s WorkLife Initiative seeks to improve and sustain worker health by studying the influences of work-based and non-work-based factors. NIOSH disseminated results from such studies at their international symposium held last September in Washington, DC. New approaches to enhancing worker health such as this require the latest scientific research from the SH&E community, which means that it is imperative for us to always encourage our SH&E students, researchers and educators and to provide them with the resources they need to carry out their work. We must also find ways to cross-train our safety students in health promotion concepts and strategies as new programs like WorkLife emerge in the SH&E field.

This issue of JSHER features an article from Agraz-Boeneker, Groves and Haight titled “An Examination of Observations and Incidence Rates for a Behavior-Based Safety Program” as well as article from Hart, Neumann and Veltri titled “Hand Injury Prevention Training: Assessing Knowledge, Attitude and Behavior.” Each article is an empirical piece of research about core concepts in our field that affect both the training of tomorrow’s SH&E practitioners and the delivery of SH&E services at the worksite.
I congratulate the Academics Practice Specialty members for their vision and commitment to the future while promoting the SH&E profession. Please take the articles in this publication into your own SH&E education and research practices. I hope that the JSHER will prompt you to join the other Academics Practice Specialty members and to make contributions by authoring articles in furtherance of SH&E education and research. Thank you for your continued support of JSHER and the Academics Practice Specialty.

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