American College of Physicians Assistants

March 19, 1973

TO: The Board of Directors and Officers
American Academy of Physicians' Assistants

FROM: The National Executive Committee
American College of Physicians Assistants

RE: Academy Merger Proposal

We have received with interest your letter of 2/26/73 outlining the "conditions" regarding the proposed merger, Mr. Godkins. In subsequent phone conversations we have learned that this "package" was the work of your total Board. Consequently, we are addressing ourselves directly to that Board.

When we first met in Cincinnati it was apparent that both groups had aspirations of being that national organization that would be called upon to represent the physician's assistant profession. At the same time we were aware of the weaknesses and strengths of both the Academy and the College as well as the other groups on the national scene. We, therefore, agreed to merger negotiations, understood at that time to be continued communication and additional sessions of discussion to work out the details of a merger proposal to be taken back to our separate organizations. This agreement was reached because we knew that all P. A.'s, regardless of specialty, will be better able to deal with current and future professional developments if they are united in one organization rather than divided into a number of splinter groups vieing for political and economic advantage. This latter situation would by its very nature push the physician's assistant to the end of the list of priorities to be dealt with by existing medical authorities (and it is this very real danger that is still confronting us).

We wonder why the ethics of negotiation have been so severely breached? We can only be confused by your executive decision to make unilateral changes in the tentative, basic agreements worked out in Cincinnati in November 1972 without even so much as a notice to us of your intent. Further, your premature action of submitting that changed proposal to your entire membership for approval as the merger agreement lacked again the most basic courtesy of informing the College. These actions cause us to question your motives, your honesty, and your integrity concerning a unification of organizations--either with the

College or anyone else seriously interested and active in representing the physician's assistant profession.

We are concerned with a prevalent attitude expressed by a number of your executive members, or at very least a few of your most vocal Board members. This attitude of superiority in many instances is transferred into a dictatorial organizational posture which has been witnessed by Mr. Gilreath at his first meeting in Oklahoma City, by Mr. Snell at the Board meeting in Washington, by Messers. Sielski, Cole, and Millett recently in Washington, and without fail by other members of the College's National Executive Committee when in contact with the executive representatives of the Academy. No other example of this can be a better demonstration than Mr. Godkin's letter of February 26, 1973, in which his opening paragraph calls our attention to a list of "'conditions' regarding the proposed merger." Then in closing he extends us an offer of a basic democratic procedure that in his own words is "a luxury not always enjoyed by the current Academy membership." (Reference page 2, paragraph 1, enclosure).

It is not unreasonable for the Academy to strive for the very best in basic educational standards for all P.A.'s. It is unreasonable for the Academy to expect that its recommendations are the only right solution by not soliciting P.A. input outside its own structure and, in so doing, offend the same sensibilities it accuses the A.M.A. of disregarding.

The primary concern at this particular time concerning the merger proposal and what it can achieve is not one of how many Board seats the College and the Academy hold, where the office will be, which organization provides the President, etc., but rather is something much more basic to the whole concept of the new profession. Of paramount importance is the philosophy, Constitution/By-Laws, policies, and attitudes governing the Approved Organization, its Officers, and its Board. Whether the Academy's and the College's roles in creating such an organization are recalled five years from now is irrelevant. For in the long run, we are only in business to serve our members by attempting to discover for them those directions and avenues best traveled for the good of the profession and, therfore, for the good of the patient and the physician supervisor. Five years from now, with the carefully explored and properly directed merger of both the corporate entities as well as the philosophical attitudes of two (even three or four) present organizations, the entire medical community will benefit. On the other hand, if honesty and foresightedness are excluded from this present merger proposal and the "pressure" you have alluded to a number of times is the main constituent of the merger, then we fear the end result will be one of discontent, bickering, political fragmentation, and eventually a division that will cause us to be further

behind professionally than if a merger had never taken place. Consequently, we believe this "window in time" can and must be reconstructed into an archway by both organizations which can stand in time as the Arc de Triomphe of the P. A. profession.

We cannot stress too strongly our convictions concerning one basic principle that has guided us and from which our members will not stray--the principle of democracy within the entire organization which, in the final analysis, is Chapter Structure as described in the College's Constitution and By-Laws. This, as you well know, was our most basic request, not demand, in the November 1972 meeting, but one which you have seen fit to designate as a "premature...grandiose regional scheme as had been initially proposed." It is this very structure under which we now function that is the basis for giving the member important input and allowing him to keep abreast of all business. So you see "premature" and "grandiose" are simply terms sceptics might use to name the unknown. As a matter of fact, this type of structure is the nuts and bolts of the working machinery of both professional and non-professional organizations with greater seniority and greater success in functioning than either the Academy or the College enjoy at this time.

Guided by the philosophy already expressed above, our Executive Committee has studied in depth the "package" from the Academy and have come up with several inconsistencies and major adjustments. Just as an example, according to the By-Laws sent us, in Article I, Section 4, lines 35-38, the College would not be eligible to participate in the elections proposed on April 14 because we received your proposal for merger on February 28. Even without reasonable time for the College to deliberate on the "package," there are insufficient days to number the required 45 in order to declare candidacy, much less to do so by letter. Again, according to Article I, Section 2, lines 13-15, we are excluded not only from candidacy for election but also from membership by the direction of the Academy Ey-Laws since the training programs of our membership have not been accepted, we have yet to apply for approval by the Academy Board of Directors, and our members have not passed a certifying examination approved by the Academy Board of Directors.

Concerning these two problems, we searched for a "suspension or elastic clause" in your By-Laws which would make the Academy proposal feasible, but it does not exist. In this vein, it is our conviction that between the Constitution and By-Laws of any organization there should be all the general checks and balances necessary to operate within a democratic framework without being so constrictive that officers, board, and members of honest intention cannot move the organization forward. The question subsequently presents itself to us--how can we in good conscience consider merging with an organization at this time and expect

the newly created Approved Organization to weather the test of time and be of constructive service to its members if that organization does not uphold immediately the rules and regulations that it has chosen to live by or does not have the necessary expertise to inbuild enough flexibility into those rules and regulations to allow for the eventualities which beset any profession.

Now we will emphasize the fact that we still believe a merger, federation, or liaison is still very necessary, not because the A.M.A. says so, nor because the Joint Review Committee on P. A. Education holds out an enticement, nor because one or the other of us is a fly in the other's ointment, but simply because the current and potential members of P. A. organizations deserve the very best national organization, the most constructive officers and board available for the dues they now pay or will be paying and because the Academy and the College now have that great opportunity, as Mr. Moson so eloquently expressed when in Cincinnati, to help bring to the patient an increase of quality medical services in a way heretofore stifled by most present medical and paramedical personnel.

In closing, may we reiterate that we do accept the Academy's invitation to merge but find that the merger "package" presented to us has built into it the absolute impossibility for merger under its very jurisdiction. Although we find the "conditions" restrictive, we do feel that they are workable with the exception of Condition #7. In light of all of the above, we are proposing to the Academy that a Liaison for Merger Board be established between the Academy and the College to be composed of no less than six members--three Executive Board members from the Academy and three National Executive Committee members from the College. The purpose of this Liaison Board would be to compile an equitable and acceptable merger agreement with the mechanisms and procedures by which the merger will be accomplished. This Liaison Board would meet immediately (or shortly after the April Conference for the convenience of the Academy) and at regular intervals until a merger of the two organizations is accomplished by approval of the work of the Liaison Board by both Academy and the College membership vote.

Looking forward to your acceptance of this proposal and your understanding of the necessity for it, we remain

Sincerely yours,
The National Executive Committee

Gregory Gilreath

Gregory Gilreath, P. A.
President

Roy W. Snell, P. A.
Secretary

RWS:GG:gd

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Moson
Dr. Ruhe
Dr. Fauser
Mr. L. Detmer
Mr. Griffin