

ISSUES CONCERNING THE AAMC TRAVEL PROGRAM

*Travel Committee Co-Chairs Gwen Foster and Debi Wood
February, 2023*

- The Travel Program has been operating since at least 2001. Travel agencies [AHI](#) and [Gohagan and Company](#) have been AAMC'S primary travel operators. However, between 2015 and 2018, [Orbridge Destination Specialists](#) organized several tours of U.S. destinations and [Special Group Tours](#) offered tours of parts of the United Kingdom.
- Since 2018 AHI and Gohagan have been the only travel providers. AHI and Gohagan offer different types of land-based trips, but both offer small-ship river and ocean cruises.
- The program seems to have been robust in the early years. It was a revenue-producing activity for AAMC, with as much as \$10,000 in commissions received in some years.
- Before the pandemic, there was a decline in alum participation in the travel program. The pandemic caused trips to be cancelled in 2020 and 2021. In 2022, five (5) alums and five friends/partners took AAMC trips, some of which were re-scheduled from 2021.
- In 2022, AHI and Gohagan were purchased by the Cetares Group, a private investment group that focuses on travel and tourism, hospitality, business, and consumer services. Our liaisons are still in place, but Gohagan has been basically “missing in action,” in terms of marketing assistance, and has had no alum reservations on any of their cruises.
- AHI primarily markets the AAMC Travel Program by mailing trip brochures to alums, using mailing lists that Alumnae Relations has updated quarterly for AHI, at the request of AAMC. There is no guarantee that Alumnae Relations will continue to do this.
- Gohagan has relied primarily on marketing via our website and ads in the *Quarterly*, but now has requested an updated mailing list to send printed materials to alums. Gohagan plans to apply a set of filters to the list to prioritize who receives the more expensive hard copy brochures. Some of these filters (e.g., age group, past travels, type of careers, etc.), run the risk of being more exclusive than inclusive of our diverse AAMC membership. Gohagan also said it would create co-sponsored pages on their website for AAMC (as AHI does) but has not followed through.
- AAMC recently received demands from some alumnae that they stop receiving any brochures from AHI. Gohagan's request for a mailing list—whether the one that AAMC is creating or the larger one that resides at Alumnae Relations—combined with these requests from alumnae raise policy issues about sharing contact information.

- There has been no consistent reporting of financial information with the committee beyond occasional reports that were presented at BOG meetings by the Treasurer. Lila has begun to notify the co-chairs when the travel agencies send checks to AAMC.
- AAMC has provided inexpensive medical assistance insurance for all alums taking an AAMC trip through one of our travel partners. In 2021, AHI began including insurance that covers medical expenses (accident and illness), trip delays and emergency evacuations as part of their travel package. Gohagan does not offer this, so AAMC continues to cover the costs.
- This is no longer a program that can be effectively operated by volunteers without consistent staff support. To be effective, the program needs, among other things:

software systems to record who is traveling and with which company;

the capacity to find new trips to attract travelers and assess whether to establish a relationship with other travel agencies;

the capacity to use a broad range of marketing tools and/or assist travel agency partners with marketing;

routine staff reporting to Travel Program Committee and access to program income and expenditure information.

The Travel Program Committee recommends that:

1. BOG use 2023 to explore and decide where the Travel Program fits in AAMC's future program priorities, and how it will be appropriately supported by staff.
2. The Travel Committee be charged to research revenue-producing travel program models in 2023 that are more responsive to alums' interests—as identified in our 2019 survey—and appeal to a broader audience.
3. Gohagan's request for alum contact information be declined. The Travel Committee will use other marketing methods for Gohagan trips (e.g., the AAMC website, *Quarterly* ads and articles, social media, etc.)
4. AAMC discontinue providing insurance for Gohagan travelers. Instead, encourage travelers to get adequate coverage on their own.
5. BOG establish/clarify policies regarding sharing alum contact information with travel operators or other outside entities.