

# Looking Ahead

## Board endorses new planning process

BY BRIAN SHEPARD

At the November meeting in St. Louis, the OPTN/UNOS board of directors endorsed a new planning process that will help the board focus on OPTN and UNOS projects that have the potential for the greatest impact on transplant patients.

By evaluating and prioritizing new projects at an early stage in their development, the board will be able to make the best use of finite resources, including one of the most important—committee members' time and effort.

The board approved a values statement and five key goals that form the backbone for the new process.

### VALUES STATEMENT

The OPTN promotes long, healthy and productive lives for persons with organ failure by promoting maximized organ supply, effective and safe care, and equitable organ allocation and access to transplantation; and doing so by balancing competing goals in ways that are transparent, inclusive and enhance public trust in the national organ donation system.

### KEY GOALS

- Increase the number of transplants.
- Increase access to transplants.
- Improve posttransplant survival.
- Promote transplant patient safety.
- Promote living donor safety.

### DETERMINING SPECIAL FOCUS

Although all five key goals are important, from year to year the board may determine that one or more of the goals requires a specific focus. The executive committee will then begin the planning process by suggesting a share of project development time for each of the five key goals.

Ideas for new projects that support the key goals will come from OPTN/UNOS committees, as ideas for new projects always have. The committees are the source of the network's energy and ideas, and are the place in the system where the hard work of policy development is done.

At the beginning of each year, committees will offer ideas for new projects that they believe would be beneficial in the coming year. UNOS staff then will estimate the resources required to develop and implement each one.

Having committees develop annual work plans that attempt to advance overall goals of the network isn't new. What is new is the step that follows—prioritization. While most projects considered by OPTN/UNOS committees have the potential to provide some benefit, all projects aren't created equal. Currently, high-impact projects can get stuck in line behind projects of lesser import.

Before committees start to spend significant time on new efforts, the proposed projects will go through a prioritization process designed to put resources behind the projects that deliver the most value to the transplant community.

### DEVELOPING A PLAN

The first work on prioritization will be made by the OPTN/UNOS policy oversight committee (POC)—a committee that includes the vice-chairs of most of the other committees. The POC's draft plan will be reviewed by the executive committee, a small working group of senior members of the board.

The ultimate authority for approving each project's work plan is in the hands of the board of directors. With a prioritized list of projects and an estimation of the resources required, committees will learn early on in the process whether a new project is feasible. They'll be able to dedicate their time and energy to projects that they know have the support of the board of directors.

Finally, they'll know that there will be sufficient resources to implement the new policy once it's approved, including programming the policy in a timely manner.

By increasing communication between the OPTN/UNOS board and committees—and making informed decisions about priorities and resources—the board hopes to move projects forward swiftly and smoothly that have the best hope of providing the greatest benefit to transplant patients and the transplant community. [U](#)

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Brian Shepard is UNOS' director of policy, and board and committee operations.

### CORRECTION

The Organ Donation and Transplantation Alliance is an independent organization, and not a part of HRSA, as stated in the Jan.-Feb. *Update*, p. 5. Sue M. Dunn, RN, B.S.N., M.B.A., CPTC, is current vice president of the Alliance.

We regret any confusion that the previous misstatements may have caused.