I began a process of discovery after a number of ACPE emails and other communications in early 2014, related to decisions by the ACPE Board of Representatives and President to innovate the process of how we certify supervisors. The rationale for change focused upon our need to respond to the number of persons in the certification process who seemed to be leaving due to difficulty in matriculating, along with a need to change and streamline our processes in a similar fashion to the actions of the Association of Professional Chaplains in recent years.

In light of the turn of events, I became interested in collecting data on the numbers of certifications and available positions. First, I contacted the ACPE national office for the numbers of persons certified by year and the gap between those certified as Associate or "acting" and then those fully certified. I received raw data on this in late February 2014 (noted in Figure 4, below), which demonstrated that the ACPE increased the numbers of certified supervisors steadily from 1968 through 2012 (the date of the most current data available).

I next sought information about chaplaincy positions, as this seemed related, indirectly, to broad concerns in the ACPE. As a CPE Supervisor since 1982, I have attempted to be diligent in keeping accurate information about positions for chaplains in the regional and immediate areas in which I had worked, and in recent years I also made use of dedicated search engines for jobs in order to get a better sense of the market. After moving to the VA in Portland, Oregon in 2012 I began to notice that most advertisements for chaplain positions were for PRN positions, and the majority of those were in the area of hospice care. Full time positions for chaplains in medical centers appeared to be few and far between.

I was moved to develop an electronic survey of APC/ACPE members to collect new data, which I did in consultation with the ACPE national office. This survey was "owned" by the ACPE and provided to the APC for use and distribution through organizational newsletters. I present here some of the results, as so far analyzed, and preliminary thoughts. I am still working with the survey data in terms of possible relationships to the job market and to the process of becoming an ACPE supervisor.

Figure 1

Figure 1 notes the identities of those who responded. There is some duplication of respondents, in that some department heads are both CPE Supervisors and APC Board Certified Chaplains.
Among the survey's initial findings were the following:

**Newly funded permanent staff:**
From 341 responses, 98 full time positions were reported to have been funded over the past three years (excluding part time and temporary positions, and centers indicating over 10 positions).

**Newly funded temporary staff:**
From 242 responses, 197 temporary positions were reported to have been funded over the past three years.

**Vacant due to retirement or death:**
From 247 responses, 28 positions were reported to have been backfilling due to retirements or death.

**In the past three years, how many positions have you been able to fill?**
From 205 responses, 196 positions were reported to have been filled.

**In the past three years, how many CPE Supervisor positions have you been able to fill?**
From 142 responses, 34 CPE Supervisor positions were reported to have been filled.

Regarding the above findings: All partial totals were omitted. Narrative responses which were not clearly stated as a number were excluded (e.g., “all of them” was a frequent response). Also, answers which indicated over 10 positions were omitted. Several responses stated 11-16 positions, and these high numbers were questionable and suggested that respondents were including CPE student positions.

From this data, I offer a few thoughts:

1. There is some robustness in newly funded chaplain positions, with the total of temporary and permanent positions approaching 300 in this sample.
2. The number of supervisors hired over the past year was reported to be 34. This number may have been included in the number of permanent positions funded.
3. The number of vacancies due to retirement or death was 28. This number, if added with the newly funded positions, increases the overall number of vacancies to 323 in this sample.
4. An interesting comparison lies in connection with the number of positions that were reported to have been filled: 196. It appears that there are growing numbers of chaplain positions which are beyond that of “flat line hires” (i.e., when a chaplain leaves a chaplain is replaced). It seem to be more temporary and permanent being funded that those leaving.

Figure 2

![Respondents by ACPE Region](image-url)
Figure 2 shows the responses by geographic location. I used the geographical divisions from the ACPE. This allowed a grouping by states (but note that Pennsylvania is divided between two regions: those locations nearer to Philadelphia went into the Eastern Region while locations nearer to Pittsburg went into the East Central Region.)

Figure 3 highlights a surprising finding, vis-à-vis anecdotal evidence. The number of new positions (not backfilled from retirements or deaths) exceeded the number of temporary positions. I personally expected this to be just the opposite and not nearly so close in numbers. These positions are for staff chaplain and CPE Supervisory positions and include both full and part time. They do not include CPE residency positions at any level.

I place these numbers into the context of the raw data on certifications that I received from the ACPE national office in February 2014, showing the number of "acting"/Associate Supervisors certified by year from 1968 until the winter of 2012. It also included the numbers of fully certified Supervisors by year during the same time period. Both sets indicated a steady increase in the number of certified supervisors, with a significant leap during the years when the ACPE went from "acting" status to Associate status. Figure 4 is a line graph showing the progression without the actual numbers embedded.

Figure 4 indicates that the ACPE has had a steady growth in supervisory numbers through the years reported. I would conjecture that our “aging” workforce has been fairly steady as well, but that is a point for further research.

Data from the survey is still being analyzed. For more information, readers may contact me at thomas.phillips@va.gov.

[Published in the ACPE Research Network Newsletter (Spring 2015), available via www.ACPEnetwork.net.]