

Robert McDermott, PhD

AAHB President (2003-2004)

When did you attend your first Academy annual meeting? The first one ever, in 2000, in Santa Fe, NM.

What attracted you to AAHB? The tedious and boring sameness of traditional meetings and the backseat that research had taken in many other organizations.

What do you value about the Academy and why did you choose to be involved as President? I shared the founder's original vision for the organization; there were a few of us who did. What I have valued about AAHB are its criteria for membership and its focus on hosting meetings in unique venues, and its attempt to draw persons of name and stature to those meetings and to the organization itself.

What was your vision for AAHB when you assumed the role of President? The AAHB was still new when I was President. I was the first President actually determined by an election. At this point we were still focused on the original vision to be the "home of choice" for health behavior researchers. We were still adding members then.

What was your biggest accomplishment as President? We did our first fund-raising when I was President. We launched the Judy K. Black Award. I am proud of these things and the fact that we stayed on the course of the organization's original vision to pursue excellence.

Where do you see AAHB in the next 10 years? I believe it will exist, but as with many other organizations, I believe it will struggle to attract accomplished researchers. The organization needs people with promise but needs people of high achievement as well – persons of strong reputation must be the predominant group of members if the AAHB is to soar. The organization also needs to avoid iatrogenic "solutions" – it needs people who have their hands on where academic research and health behavior research in general is going, create a vision that is out in front, and have an organizational outspokenness that draws a crowd – not foolishly so, but steadfastly that draws science back into the forefront.

Do you have any advice for students and early career researchers? Continue to challenge yourself. Look towards "making the needle move" and not on how you can simply build your CV. Align yourself with others who share THAT vision. Avoid the pettiness that can work its way into some university and research settings. Pay attention to family members and others you love and never let your work be the ultimate driving force in your life – achieving balance in life will be true excellence.