Dear SBSM Members,

I am writing today to update you about two major board certification endeavors that have been undertaken to advance the field of Behavioral Sleep Medicine. In August I announced the formation of a presidential task force focused on developing an SBSM plan for resumption of BSM certification. The task force was formed in response to member feedback urging consideration of a certification pathway in light of the American Board of Sleep Medicine (ABSM) decision to discontinue the CBSM examination several years ago. The charge of the task force is to develop a multidiscipline BSM certification plan that was envisioned to be established as a companion to a discipline-specific subspecialty board certification for Sleep Psychology through the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP).

The American Board of Sleep Psychology (ABSLEEP) was formed as an independent organization to advance Sleep Psychology as a specialty within the discipline of Psychology. Their work has been supported by the SBSM and AASM. ABSLEEP achievements have included the designation of Sleep Psychology as a specialty with the American Psychological Association (APA) through its Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP) and attainment of a seat on the Council of Specialties in Professional Psychology. However, ABPP did not support an ABSLEEP application to establish Sleep Psychology specialty board certification. The organization subsequently decided to focus its efforts on pursuing ABPP subspecialty designation through one or more of the established ABPP specialty boards.

I regret to inform you the SBSM was recently notified by ABSLEEP that it has decided to discontinue its pursuit of the ABPP subspecialty process for Sleep Psychology. The attached ABSLEEP update describes in detail their efforts and why they concluded subspecialty status was not practicable at this time and would not meet sleep psychologists’ needs as a certification option. As a result, ABSLEEP expressed interest in collaboration with other interested parties in the pursuit of creating a specialization in Sleep Psychology and/or more broadly, Behavioral Sleep Medicine while remaining open to revisiting ABPP board specialization in the future. While this news is disappointing, the SBSM remains committed to continued dialogue with the APA and ABPP. We also recommend Sleep Psychology continue to maintain a seat on the Council of Specialties in Professional Psychology.

I believe that with no discipline-specific certification pathway for psychologists on the horizon, the work of the recently formed BSM Certification Task Force becomes even more important for our field. The task force is in the process of developing BSM certification guidelines that would expand eligibility for licensed independent clinicians in health-related fields who meet certain
BSM training and clinical experience requirements. The task force is also considering a narrower certificate in CBT-I. The goal of broadening eligibility is twofold: 1) to more rapidly expand the pool of certified BSM specialists (the previous ABSM-sponsored certification generated approximately 200 CBSMs over nearly a decade) and 2) to define credible certification pathways in a practice environment where new and established organizations are considering, offering or expanding certifications in sleep coaching, sleep consulting and sleep education.

A number of challenges await us as we pursue resumption of BSM certification. It will require considerable financial and volunteer investment including the establishment of a separate boarding organization to manage application, examination and certification processes. Minimum start-up costs are estimated to be between $30,000 - $50,000. There are also varied opinions about the minimum qualifications necessary for certification, the composition of an examination, and whether one or more certifications should be established.

My expectation is that a certification plan will maintain fidelity to Behavioral Sleep Medicine science and scope of practice and be established in such a way that it credibly advances our field. Inevitably, any certification plan we develop will not please everyone or perfectly meet every member’s professional needs. We hope to have a plan ready by April 2017 for a membership vote. I invite you to join in the process of shaping our certification recommendations by sharing your thoughts and feedback at membership@behavioralsleep.org. Regular updates will be provided through email, website, newsletter, Facebook, and member-sponsored listserv communications.

Best regard,

Michael Schmitz, PsyD, LP, CBSM
SBSM President