

Building a Solid Foundation for Merger

Dear Member

We are pleased to announce that the merger negotiations between AFM, CREnet, and SPIDR have moved closer to implementation. As Presidents and Chairs of the Boards of these organizations, we are personally inspired by the vision of creating a dynamic, new association that represents all aspects of the dispute resolution and collaborative decision-making field. We believe that the exciting events transpiring within our conflict resolution associations will better serve your professional goals.

Current Status

In January, the Boards of AFM, CREnet, and SPIDR adopted a Resolution approving the proposed merger in principle and adopted two Memoranda of Understanding for working together prior to the merger. The Boards also approved our working with a national expert in non-profit re-structuring, La Piana Associates, to prepare a detailed business plan for the proposed merger. This plan will be complete by May 31st, at which time our Boards will review the plan. We will then send you, our members, detailed

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Information from the business plan to enable you to give us feedback. Once the final plan is completed, we will ask for your review and approval in September and October. (See sidebar for full

We Value Our Members' Input

We are listening carefully to the input we receive from our membership as we design this new organization, and we invite you to continue to let us know how

we can better serve you. Please review the timeline for moving toward merger, and make note of the many opportunities for direct communication about these plans in the coming months. We want to hear from you!

The active involvement by members of AFM, CREnet and SPIDR is the most significant asset of each organization, and the unification of our members' strength will create an association more diverse, international, creative, and responsive than any of us could possibly achieve alone. We are designing an integrated

organization that will poise us to lead the development of our field into the 21st Century—to address the public policy and education issues necessary to enable you, our members, to have the impact within your communities that you long to have.

We trust that the information we provide you in the coming months will stimulate much discussion. We want those discussions to be heard by the leadership of AFM, CREnet, and SPIDR, so that the

new organization we propose to you will meet your professional and personal needs.

Why a Merger?

This merger is a bold, decisive undertaking to meet the needs of our members and address the demands of the new economy. To serve you adequately and assume a leadership role in the development of our field, we must create a more diverse, comprehensive, and inclusive professional home for dispute resolution and collaborative decision-making practitioners and educators. While AFM, CREnet, and SPIDR continue to grow to meet your needs, we all firmly believe that united we will be more flexible and adaptable to the quickly changing society we strive to serve and the culture of dispute resolution and collaborative decision-making we intend to build. With a combined membership of over 8,000, the new organization will become a significant leader in the field. United, we can:

- ❖ provide more relevant and useful membership benefits, information resources, and networking opportunities,
- ❖ work collectively to promote comprehensive ethics, values and principles inherent to our work,
- ❖ unify and strengthen the development of the intellectual capital of our field,
- ❖ influence public policy and advance



Sharon Press



Arnie Shienvold



Terry Wheeler



- ❖ educational leadership and guidance, and
- ❖ maximize administrative efficiencies in a much more significant way than we could ever do individually.

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It's Your Turn to Act

We invite you to read every word, seriously consider the opportunities put before you, and investigate how you can become more involved in shaping the future of the conflict resolution field. Over the next several months, please pay close attention to your mail and read your newsletters carefully. We need to hear from you now with your reaction to these exciting plans. We will keep you informed as we develop the details of our business plan for the merger, and will look for your feedback about those details. Please direct your questions, comments, and ideas to any of the Transition Group members listed in the box on this page. Also, be sure to log onto each organization's web page for up-to-the-minute information, as well as an easy way to give us your feedback.

Share in a Bold Vision

Our vision is based on the fundamental values of our field and on preserving, and indeed dramatically enhancing, the essential nature of AFM, CREnet, and SPIDR. We are committed to bold leadership at this critical stage in the development of our field. We intend to make the skills, principles and values of conflict resolution and collaborative decision-making widely available and recognized. When individuals in the future face a conflict, we want them first to think of seeking the help of a conflict

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TIMELINE 2000

Ongoing	Merger Feedback	Member input sought regarding the concept of merger via phone, letter, email, and focus groups
Through May	Business Plan	Development of a comprehensive, long-term Business Plan with the professional guidance of non-profit re-structuring experts La Piana Associates
By May 31st	Board Approval	Initial Business Plan approved by the Boards of Directors
June	Grant Preparation	Preparation of grant application to the Hewlett Foundation for additional funding to support the cost of merger
June & July	Plan Details Mailed	Informational mailings to the memberships that present details of the Business Plan, including ideas about membership and dues, benefits, governance and staff structure, and program areas
July to September	Plan Feedback	Member feedback actively solicited regarding the Business Plan details
July 11-15	AFM Conference	AFM will hold its Annual Conference on "Values in Mediation" in Salt Lake City, and will include merger discussions in focus groups, plenaries, and at the membership meeting
September 14-16	CREnet & SPIDR Conference	SPIDR & CREnet will hold a joint conference on "Opening the Way to a Civil Society: Creating a Culture of Community and Dialogue" in Albuquerque, and will include merger discussions in focus groups, plenaries, and at membership meetings
September	Plan Adjustment	Adjustments made to Business Plan as necessary based on member feedback
October	Poll Membership	Approval or rejection of merger by AFM, CREnet and SPIDR memberships via a process to be determined
October	Grant Meeting	Hewlett Foundation meeting to consider grant for support funding
November	Notification	Notification to memberships with results of ratification and response from the Hewlett Foundation

Building a Foundation

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resolution practitioner or educator. While we are still working to refine a mission statement for the new organization, please know that it will be diverse, value-based and principled. We see the organization's fundamental purposes as:

- ❖ Promoting effective resolution and management of conflicts and disputes at all levels of society—individuals, families, organizations, schools, universities and other educational institutions, communities, states, countries—through a variety of dispute resolution, mediation, and collaborative decision-making processes.
- ❖ Promoting the highest quality and ethical practice of mediation and conflict resolution and management approaches among diverse practitioners and educators.

- ❖ Serving as one of the central, unifying voices for the field of dispute resolution nationally and internationally, with implications for public awareness, public policy and advocacy.
- ❖ Encouraging the widest possible diversity and multi-cultural participation within the field.

You Are Essential

Our organizations would not exist without members like you. For many years, members of our organizations have contributed service, time and energy, money, and a vision of a world that deals with conflicts in a way that enhances the quality of life. As representatives of the current leadership, we want to build on the visionary leadership of those who have preceded

us. With your guidance and support, we intend to seize the opportunities before us, address the challenges facing our field, and prepare for a dynamic future.

You are essential to helping us shape this exciting future. Your support has led us to this pivotal moment in the history of the field, and your continued support and insights will lead us to a future where our shared values and principles will be widely embraced. Please give us the benefit of your ideas and feedback as we continue to endeavor to live the principles of our field through this merger process.

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