



# News Release

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## **WESTERN FACULTY MEMBER AND ALUMNA VISIT WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**St. Joseph, Mo.** —May 8, 2006— Marsha Dolan, RHIA, associate professor of nursing and coordinator of the health information technology program at Missouri Western State University, and Lucy Sweiger, RHIT and 2002 alumnus of Western, met with legislative staffers in the offices of Rep. Sam Graves and Sen. Christopher “Kit” Bond and James Talent in Washington, D.C., in March to discuss the need to upgrade the system healthcare organizations used to code and classify patient diagnosis and procedures.

While visiting with members of Missouri’s Congressional delegation, Dolan, who also serves as the president of the Missouri Health Information Management Association (MHIMA), and Sweiger discussed the importance of more accurate and complete coded patient information and health data in order to improve healthcare delivery, quality monitoring and patient safety, research, analysis, and reimbursement. The United States is currently the only developed country not using this updated system, called ICD-10, making it difficult for the United States to share disease and mortality data with other countries. As a result, the ability to track and respond to international public health threats and bioterrorism events in real time is limited by the reliance on an outdated system.

In addition to upgrading the United States classification system, Dolan and Sweiger discussed other issues related to improving the quality of health information for better patient care. These include education and training for a skilled workforce to manage electronic health information systems, genetic nondiscrimination laws needed to

protect health information, and the development of the nationwide health information network.

“2006 is a crucial year for health information issues. MHIMA and its members have a professional obligation to play an active role in initiatives that can improve healthcare through quality information,” Dolan said. “I was pleased to have the opportunity to talk to our representatives in Congress and appreciate their interest in these issues. I feel strongly that we made our voices heard.”

Dolan and Sweiger joined more than 150 health information management (HIM) leaders who made visits on Capitol Hill as part of the 2006 Capitol Hill Day, an annual event sponsored by the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA).

MHIMA is an affiliate of the AHIMA, the premier association of health information management (HIM) professionals. AHIMA’s 50,000 members are dedicated to the effective management of personal health information needed to deliver quality healthcare to the public. Founded in 1928 to improve the quality of medical records, AHIMA is committed to advancing the HIM profession in an increasingly electronic and global environment through leadership in advocacy, education, certification, and lifelong learning.

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*Missouri Western State University is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The university offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.*