

Leader to Watch:

Suzanne Miyamoto, PhD, RN, FAAN

Joyce Batcheller, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN



JB: Congratulations on your new role. I am honored to be able to learn more about you and understand your role and get your perspective on the future. Can you tell me about your career path and what brought you to where you are today?

While I might not have recognized it at first, my pathway to policy began early in my career. I always had an interest in psychology, and some of my most powerful experiences included a clinical rotation in a women's correctional facility and through my psychology degree, visiting with incarcerated individuals who were unable to stand trial due to their mental state. As a new graduate, my first position out of school was in perinatal nursing. A portion of my patients spoke Spanish and, while working to provide high quality care without being able to fully communicate with them, I wondered how they experienced care. Later, I became a case manager caring for women who suffered from anorexia and bulimia. Being on call and receiving phone calls at all hours, I heard their pain but also hopes for the future. I became more knowledgeable about mental health.

These experiences and the policy course in my master's program are where it "clicked" for me. I knew that I wanted to become involved in policy development. I had the opportunity to hear a lecture from a policy professional who had worked in the Clinton Administration, in the Senate, and lobbied. After her lecture, I immediately introduced myself and expressed my interest to learn more. This casual conversation launched my career's trajectory. Through that single interaction she mentored me and helped me secure an internship in my Congressman's office. My experience was different than the traditional intern since I had finished my master's and had work experience. The staffers in the office provided me with a wealth of opportunities. On my third day, they assigned me to write a floor statement for the Congressman on small business health insurance plans. My parents owned a small business and I was a nurse, so the connection was clear in their eyes. With their assistance to polish the statement, I was able to hear the Congressman read the words I had written later that day on the floor of the House. I still have a copy of the Congressional Record where it was published.



I continued to seek out opportunities to further my policy knowledge, working at both the state and national levels. Developing strong relationships with two incredibly renowned researchers, Drs. Ada Sue Hinshaw and Suzanne Feetham, led to a Summer Policy Fellowship at the National Institutes of Health.

JB: Who have been the most influential people in your growth as a nursing leader?

Many strong leaders have been influential and essential in my career development. To start, Dr. Beatrice Kalisch. Dr. Kalisch took me under her wing and provided me with experiences in research, consulting, presenting, and co-authorship. She recognized my potential at the age of 23, made sure I finished my PhD (serving as my chairperson), and taught me to go after my passions. Dr. Hinshaw was the Dean of University of Michigan at the time of my studies and helped me with my first conceptual model. I learned from her, as the first Director of the National Institute of Nursing Research, that passion must be paired with evidence through a calm and collected demeanor.

My 12 years of service at the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) played a tremendous role in helping me grow as a policy professional and leader. I will forever be grateful to Dr. Polly Bednash for taking a risk and hiring a nurse with not all of the “experiences” necessary for a government affairs manager. From her I learned strength in difficult times. Drs. Jane Kirschling and Nancy DeBasio helped me

understand that great leaders do not always have the answers, but know how to find them. Dr. Deb Trautman invested in my executive leadership and championed my growth.

Just as importantly, the experience I had as a Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellow was transformational. This experience taught me to span boundaries, think more cross-sectionally, and ultimately enhanced my network of trusted and brilliant colleagues.

JB: We are in the midst of major transitions in health care. What do you feel will be the most important things for you to focus on to move your organization into the future to ensure success?

There are unique and compelling issues in which nursing is poised to lead. The American Academy of Nursing is composed of some of the greatest nursing experts, who in their own right and collectively have changed the face of health care. This knowledge must be advanced in this time of transition.

The Academy’s Edge Runners initiative is a prime example of nurses who are working locally and globally. It is imperative that the Academy strategically disseminate the work of its Fellows, the organization, and the profession writ large to enhance, influence, and impact change.

Other major platforms for involvement that have national traction—and could be increasingly enhanced by nursing’s expertise—is the National Academy of Medicine’s work on clinician well-being and resilience

as well as artificial intelligence implications/applications for healthcare.

JB: What have you learned about transitioning to a new role that others will learn from as they experience transitions?

I attended the American Academy of Nursing's 2018 policy conference before I officially began my role, which was a critical learning opportunity. I believe it is important to actively listen and ask questions. Every organization has a culture, a history, and a threshold for change. You have to seek out diverse perspectives and understand that you will not always agree. Yet, the goal of hearing and being heard can increase the willingness to negotiate and move forward. Within the Academy, there are several generations, experiences, and backgrounds making it vital to tap into and bridge those perspectives.

The organization has grown substantially and the new fellows each year bring creative ideas for the future. They represent the global perspective of the Academy, which is nicely buttressed by the wealth of experience from longstanding fellows.

JB: How can the nursing leadership community assist you and your organization in successful transition and success in the future?

The experiences and relationships that I developed while at AACN will be very helpful. While at AACN, I was the Executive Director of the Nursing Community Coalition, which comprises 62 national nursing organizations. I led this work for a decade to gain consensus on what the various nursing organizations could agree on as it related to policy change. The collective impact to lead change is incredible. I had firsthand experience learning the perspectives and challenges from all of the organizations involved in this coalition—widening my lens. I believe that as healthcare continues to evolve so will the collective “us.” My hope is that nursing leadership continues to find areas of common ground for maximum impact.

JB: What roles do you foresee emerging or growing in need in the next 10 years and what advice would you offer leaders aspiring to fill those roles?

Technology, innovation, and research using big data sets will be increasingly important. There are no boundaries, and nurses can fill many different roles. We need the public to understand what nurses do and the impact nurses have every day across the continuum. Nursing needs to work on policy—not sidetracked by political strongholds, but rather promoting the profession and the healthcare solutions we offer. We need to figure out how we can fit into the broader context to make meaningful contributions.



Name:

Suzanne Miyamoto

Hometown:

Rochester, Michigan

Current job:

CEO, American Academy of Nursing

Education:

Bachelor of science in nursing, bachelor of arts in psychology, master of science in nursing, and doctorate of philosophy in nursing from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

First job in nursing:

Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, Michigan

Being in a leadership position gives me the opportunity to:

Elevate the voice of nursing at the national level. The incredible science, innovation, compassion, and passion that defines nursing is profound and unique. Having a leadership position that serves an organization of some of the most talented within our profession is an honor and a privilege.

Most people don't know that:

I love 70s rock music.

My best advice to aspiring leaders:

Your authenticity and demonstrated success transcends titles and credentials. When you are genuine and committed to the larger, common goal—not personal gain, leadership opportunities will arise and you will rise to the occasion.

One thing I want to learn:

Japanese cooking

One word to describe me:

Driven



JB: How would you describe the legacy you hope to develop in your current role?

First, I hope to inspire and lead toward a future of strong mentorship so that we have nurses prepared to serve in the future. Second, I hope to be a champion for nurses to embrace their most genuine self for authentic leadership—there is no limit on what nurses can impact when we stay true to who we are as individuals, professionally and personally. We should always adopt, “I am a nurse,” and never, “I’m just a nurse.” Finally, I would like to see systems change to enhance alignment for patient health and wellness. This is an achievable goal if we work together by branching out of our individual lanes.

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