

President's Message

Fluidity: Creating seamless leadership transitions



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There are many ways to describe leadership transitions—passing the baton, handing over the gavel, or a changing of the guard. At the Academy's *Transforming Health, Driving Policy* conference, our roles shifted from President and President-Elect to President and Immediate Past President. Over the past year, we have worked closely together to prepare for this moment. The Academy has been in what we like to describe as a positive state of flux. Positive from the perspective that we have been able to grow as an organization in our approaches, evaluation methods, and strategies.

During this past year, the Board of Directors has worked to be a stabilizing force for the organization's volunteer leaders, Fellows, and to our partners. From the outside, it may have appeared that we were slower to act, but behind the scenes, it has been a flurry of activity. We held additional Board meetings, Executive Committee discussions, and were in constant contact with the Academy's CEO. Because we know the reality that transitions, and in essence, change is hard. While published a decade ago, in the *Harvard Business Review*, [Michael D. Watkins, 2010](#), author of the *First 90 Days*, wrote an article that remains poignant and speaks to the nature of transition. In it he states,

...transitions are times when momentum builds or it doesn't, when opinions about new leaders begin to

crystallize. It's a time when feedback loops — virtuous cycles or vicious ones — get established (para. 5).

Knowing this, our goal was to build momentum and promote virtuous lines of communication. We used multiple methods to answer questions and take in feedback. Whether it was the President's message in FAAN Mail, direct communications to the Expert Panels, or one on one conversations, we lent our ear and provided the Board of Directors and CEO your insights. We made a commitment to be aligned so that you received consistent messages.

We spoke with one voice once the decisions of the Board were made. Together, we planned for a future where the surprises would be few and the reversal of any approach would be minimal so not to cause confusion. During this past year, our own world view expanded as we reflected deeply on what the Academy means to us, our Fellows, and the tremendous opportunity ahead.

Through all of this, we were proud to be the voice of the organization when national opportunities for impact arose. As President and President-Elect, we offered the voice of our organization at the House of Representatives' Gun Violence Prevention Task Force press conference and the House of Representatives' Black Maternal Health Caucus's Stakeholder Summit. At each of these events, we shared the evidence and recommendations prepared by our Expert Panels and noted the work of our innovative Edge Runners. But most importantly, we've cultivated key relationships with policy makers who have true influence and who can help advance our recommendations.

Moreover, we continued to advance our policy work. In this past year, the Academy sent 30 direct communications to Congress and the Administration as well as disseminated 13 policy pieces to the public through *Nursing Outlook* and the press. It was a productive year.

Being at the policy conference in October was reenergizing. We welcomed over 1,000 colleagues and inducted an impressive new cohort of 231 Fellows, along with three Honorary Fellows. This year's Living Legends (Geraldine "Polly" Bednash, PhD, RN, FAAN, C. Alicia Georges, EdD, RN, FAAN, Pamela Mitchell, PhD, RN FAHA, FAAN, Linda Schwartz, DrPh, RN, FAAN, and Mary Wakefield, PhD, RN, FAAN) are an outstanding reflection of the tremendous impact nurses are capable of achieving around the globe. The conference provided a venue to interact with our colleagues, peers, mentors, and friends. We had the chance to reminisce on past times and envision the future. Most

importantly, the conference honored our legacy as an organization and ushered in modern touches.

This year, and every year, we pause and celebrate. As a profession, we may not take enough opportunities to do this—to celebrate each other. To do so in full pomp and circumstance. To truly showcase what we have accomplished individually and collectively. To simply have fun together. It is the highlight of one's year or in many cases their career to be a part of this incredible event and we are not the exception.

Now, we look to the future. The World Health Organization has marked 2020 as the “Year of the Nurse and Midwife” (World Health Organization, 2019). The Board is considering ways to bolster the global events that will recognize this designation. At the same time, the organization has partnered with *Nursing Now USA*, which is part of the larger *Nursing Now* campaign. For the US, this work is being spearheaded by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing, University of Washington School of Nursing, American Nurses Association (ANA) and the U.S. Public Health Service Chief Nurse Officer. A particular focus will be placed on workplace violence and barriers to practice and pay equity (ANA, 2019). These initiatives align directly with the Academy's 2019-2020 priorities (Academy, 2019).

Keeping on the theme of the “Year of the Nurse,” the Academy will continue to evaluate how we can grow the wealth of nursing expertise in our organization. Earlier this year, the Board of Directors launched the Fellow Selection Review Steering Committee. The goal of this work is to review our Fellow Selection process and identify opportunities where it could be modernized without losing the rigor and prestige that is associated with Fellowship. Together, we will advance this process and keep continuity across the leadership roles. As President, Immediate Past President (serving as the chair), and President-Elect, Dr. Ken White (serving as the Board liaison), we will ensure the process remains at the forefront of our priorities. Quality improvement and thoughtful assessment is key to long-term success and viability.

The Academy has used the past year to focus on refining our processes, increasing our policy impact,

and harnessing our influence on health and wellness. The Academy is a powerful entity because of who we are as Fellows. We are a respected organization because of who we are together. We are a mission driven organization striving to better serve the public.

As we prepare to close on 2019 and turn our lens to the 2020 horizon, the leadership transition at the Academy can be truly considered fluid—creating the opportunity for success and endurance in the new year.

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0029-6554/\$ – see front matter

© 2019 Published by Elsevier Inc.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2019.10.004>