



Association for Leadership Science in Nursing

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Barbara Weatherford PhD, RN; ALSN Conference Planning Team and ALSN Research Committee Member

After a career in acute care which included executive nursing leadership roles, Dr. Barbara Weatherford completed her Ph.D. and transitioned to an academic position in 2005. Membership in professional organizations has always been a part of her career, as has volunteering for committees and task forces. As a retiree, she has found her volunteer activities with ALSN are a gift that keeps on giving.

How did you first become involved in ALSN, and how has it impacted your career trajectory?

I first became involved in ALSN in 2014 when I attended my first conference, held in Dallas, Texas. At the time, I was an Assistant Professor at UMass Dartmouth and was looking for a research-focused organization in the world of leadership science. I found it, and with that membership, I have met many new researchers in education and practice who share common interests. I also learned of the research grants offered by the organization and received an early career award with two colleagues for our work on innovation competencies which we presented at the 2016 conference in Orlando, Fla. I then joined the Research Committee and remain a member today. I feel I found my research posse when I joined ALSN. I am now retired but remain an active member of ALSN because I enjoy the people, committee work, and conferences.

What would you say to nurse leaders in both practice and academia who are considering joining ALSN right now?

I wish I had been aware of ALSN when I was completing my PhD as my research was leadership-focused. I would have enjoyed being part of a research community that included nurse leaders in practice and academia. Attending the ALSN conferences is such a benefit as a member of the

organization. The sharing of ideas and networking with possibilities for developing collaborative projects is amazing. The funding potential for nursing leadership studies is also a benefit I have appreciated.

You have been very involved in planning recent ALSN conferences as part of the program committee – what have you learned about program planning from this experience?

This year, my friend and colleague Laura Caramanica began her term as V.P. for Program Planning for ALSN. When she called to ask if I would help with the abstract review and selection process, I barely hesitated before saying yes. I have been on the Program Committee for the Organization of Nurse Leaders in the New England region for years, so the process of developing programming was familiar. What I have learned was that “it takes a village”, literally. From working with our new management company, Prime Management, to learning new abstract submission and review software, the Planning Committee members, ALSN Board members were all extremely committed to making this year’s conference spectacular, even when we once again had to pivot to online conference plan. Members volunteered to review abstracts, introduce speakers for the breakout sessions. The breadth and depth of the research, quality improvement, and EBP abstracts were impressive. It was a wonderful experience to work on the conference planning and execution with all of that energy.

What do you see as some critical areas for nursing leadership research right now?

I was able to work with Esther Chipps and the Research Committee on the Delphi study to determine nursing leadership research priorities for the next several years. Hopefully, we are entering a post-pandemic world that will help leaders focus on these priorities and collaborate on studies addressing these research priorities. Most important to me is the ability to quantify the value of direct nursing care on patient outcomes in any setting.

What is one thing you would like ALSN Members to know about the benefits of membership?

Besides the depth of talent and the richness of the educational programs, I have been most impressed and pleased with my relationships with other members. This is an open and welcoming organization that is willing to help when asked and open to sharing research ideas and potential future collaborations. Members should never feel that they are not important to the organization or have nothing to contribute. ALSN is the organization to turn to if you are interested in developing new nurse leaders, research related to leadership science, or simply enjoy the exchange of ideas with a group of committed leaders.

Interview conducted by Rose O. Sherman, EdD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN