



Association for Leadership Science in Nursing

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**Carol Wahl, DNP, RN, MBA, NEA-BC, FACHE**  
**Co-chair ALSN Membership Committee**

**Tell us a little about your career path, background, and interest in advancing the science of nursing leadership.**

In Carol's words, her career path was "circuitous." After graduating from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) with an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN), Carol pursued a business degree and an MBA at UN-Omaha. Feeling the need to enhance her nursing education, she pursued a BSN and a Master's in Nursing (Education) at the College of St. Mary's in Omaha. To complete the circle, Carol graduated with her Doctorate in Nursing Practice from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in 2017. Carol describes herself as a lifelong learner who pursues learning opportunities to improve her faculty performance.

From a practice perspective, Carol started as a nurse in critical care and soon was engaged in leadership roles, serving as the CNO for 3 facilities, most recently at CHI Health Good Samaritan (Kearney, NE) for 18 years. Among her many achievements during that time was Magnet recognition and Planetree certification. In 2017, she enthusiastically transitioned from expert to novice by accepting an Assistant Professor position at UNMC-Kearney division. ALSN continues to offer her valuable professional guidance through networking and educational offerings; "I personally look forward to the upcoming webinar 'Transitioning from Practice to Academics'! I am currently the specialty coordinator for Leadership/Executive track and teach primarily in the graduate program. I am a strong believer in professional certifications and hold (with pride) NEA-BC, FACHE, and FPPC (Fellow in Patient-Centered Care). Leadership science is, and has been, my passion."

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**How did you hear about ALSN and what has been your experience with this organization?**

A faculty member suggested that Carol consider membership in ALSN. As a strong support for active involvement in professional organizations, she immediately volunteered to join the Membership Committee, met David Bailey (then the co-chair, and now our President), and placed attending a conference on her bucket list. Carol fulfilled her wish for attending conference in 2019 and was not disappointed; “It was phenomenal, and I knew I had found my new tribe. I felt a bit like a groupie being in the same room and conversing with academic leaders that I had long admired from afar. Leland Kaiser always used to say to engage with people in a circle bigger than your own to keep learning and growing. My circle has certainly grown through my ALSN involvement!”

**How did you become interested in the study of nursing leadership and how has ALSN influenced this interest?**

Carol credits supportive mentors through the years, education focus, and practice roles for her leadership passion. She remains interested because of her academic position and the supportive mentors/guides/friends at UNMC and in ALSN where she has expanded opportunities to contribute to our profession.

**One of our goals is to create a better balance between academic and practice partners. What are your ideas on how this could be accomplished?**

“I think we have a huge opportunity to improve the balance with the joint research agenda between ALSN and AONL. I also think there are many shared opportunities to pursue that will strengthen both of our work priorities. Currently we are studying how to increase grit in pre-licensure academics to better prepare nurses for the practice world – we have a shared goal.”

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

“ALSN is a relatively small organization with a “big” membership (Big = expert, influential, and passionate). It is a wonderful time to join with and learn from the “movers and shakers” in our profession – and to contribute in meaningful ways to our next generation of leaders. There are opportunities for involvement that may not be available in larger organizations. And there are opportunities for your own personal and professional growth through member interactions, webinars, conferences, and discussion boards.”

*Interview conducted by Shelly Fischer, PhD, RN, CNE  
Membership Committee*