

EDITOR'S NOTE

On one obscenely beautiful morning last spring — all brilliant color against lush greens — I turned the car onto the entrance ramp as a drab brown but impressively large hawk dipped into an aerial arc of exactly the same curve. For a brief distance we traveled parallel, before it peeled off across six lanes of traffic at low altitude. Even city dwellers like me occasionally cross paths with a fox, a wild turkey or a hawk. Parallel paths and intersections like that give me pause. They also strike me as apt metaphors for formation, not in the sense of a rigid grid, but in the mystery of confluence.



We invited each author for this issue to write about aspects of leadership in Catholic health care: characteristics and competencies, prime examples, the tradition, succession planning, challenges and transitions.

Every article came in with a focus on leadership formation as the axis against which all those aspects were considered.

A quick and cynical interpretation might be that *Health Progress* is simply offering a forum for flavor-of-the-month formation programs as they exist throughout Catholic health care. However, after reading of the depth, passion, investment and balance of risk and tradition among the different approaches to leadership formation, we can dispense with postures quick or cynical. The singular path of each ministry demonstrates a commitment to identify and form new leaders; transition from religious to lay leadership; prepare for the tumultuous changes in health care; and faithfully express Catholic identity.

It is interesting that several articles cite two to three years as the optimal length of time for a program of leadership formation. That's the amount of time most of the apostles spent preparing for their future roles in the church. As for recommendations of ongoing formation for leaders, that seems strikingly parallel to the way Jesus commended his disciples to the coming of the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit whose wisdom and guidance are invoked in what Catholic health care ministries call formation.

That the parallel paths of such human processes intersect with divine intention is what brings about confluence.

However intentional and aspirational the goals for leadership formation, none of our authors is naïve about what questions lack answers and what concerns have yet to be addressed.

Are systems investing enough resources — time, money, creative energy — in the formation they so enthusiastically tout, or is formation perceived as a benefit to be compromised when budgets tighten? Beyond anecdotal evidence, what metrics or assessment tools can confirm that the deepened personal spirituality of leaders experiencing formation results in a deeper embodiment of mission throughout the ministry? Have the right people been selected for formation, and is this really the moment to hand over the legacies of the foundresses to lay boards, executives and leaders at all levels? The future will bring answers; in the meantime, we in the ministry move along parallel paths and watch for signs of intersection and confluence.

This issue includes two special features. The first reports on preliminary results of the CHA Ministry Leadership Formation Survey. Because of the importance of this survey for members and the possibility for longitudinal studies, CHA contracted with a well-established organization known for their scholarly research, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University. We acknowledge Fr. Thomas Gaunt, SJ, PhD, executive director of CARA, and his staff for their work. We also thank the members of CHA's Ministry Leadership Formation Advisory Committee and its Measurement Subcommittee, which assisted in the survey's design and analysis.

Secondly, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Catholic Health Association in 2015, this issue begins a series of six installments of CHA's history over the last 25 years. When the final installment is published in the May-June 2015 *Health Progress*, the series will be combined with CHA's history of its first 75 years, published in 1990, and printed as one publication. Our guest author for the six articles is Pamela Schaeffer, known to most of you as the excellent editor of *Health Progress* from 2008 through 2013.

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