

June 2011 - A Message from the Director

Congratulations to the ELAM® Class of 2011!

At this year's ELAM graduation ceremony, we were honored to have Jeanne C. Sinkford, DDS, Ph.D., share her wisdom with us. Dr. Sinkford is currently associate executive director of the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) where she is the director of the Center for Equity and Diversity. She is a highly awarded leader, and her interesting bios on numerous sites across the internet are one testament to that (one of my favorites is on Answer.com). ELAM knows her as a champion of women's leadership development and a driving force behind the increase of professional diversity of the ELAM fellowship with her successfully negotiated admission for dental faculty. Her address was a wonderful blend of naming paradoxes of leadership, challenging medicine and dentistry leaders to address important links between oral health and systemic health issues, and pearls of wisdom from her own experience. **This column shares excerpts from this poignant address.**

Friday, April 15, 2011 • ELAM Graduation • ACE Conference Center, Lafayette Hill, PA



The ELAM Graduating Class of 2011

Congratulations to each of you! You will return to your parent institutions with new ideas, skills, and leadership behaviors. You will be both welcomed and challenged, for you are now destined to be change agents. That means getting your colleagues out of their comfort zones and challenging them to think and embrace change.

Today has special meaning for me also because it is an opportunity for me to thank several individuals who made it possible for women dental faculty to be a part of the ELAM experience, thereby enriching the potential of leadership across dental education. I especially thank: Page Morahan, Roz Richman, and D. Walter Cohen, whose vision and leadership made it possible for the first dental faculty to be accepted to ELAM. I want to thank the deans also from those two pilot schools (Michigan and Detroit Mercy) for their sponsorship. Today, six of the 58 US dental deans are ELAM graduates and the two women in the first class are now university vice presidents: Drs. Lisa Tedesco and Pamela Zarkowski. Both of them continue as oral health advocates while leading a broader community of scholars.

Leadership ... is about how you influence the thinking of others so that the questions being asked become different, the thinking becomes more inclusive and the solutions more complex. As health professionals, you have been conditioned to live in a world of chaos where there are multiple demands, dwindling resources, and increased levels of expectation. You will be expected to build bridges while mending fences, to lead as you follow, to lift up as you are burdened and to educate as you yourselves continue to learn. As women, you will be judged differently from your male colleagues. As also seen with minorities, you must prove to be better in order to be recognized as equal. I still see this truism as I sit on various boards and executive search committees. In the press, your hairstyle or dress will receive more commentary many times than the substance of your celebration and your purpose or cause for which you stand. You will be both wizards and witches – accomplishing the impossible while mysteriously building awesome new collaborations and partnerships.

The expectations of women leaders at home in the US are similar to those in other parts of the world. At the ADEA International Women's Leadership Conference in Brazil last year, we learned from women leaders from six continents. The message that we brought home from women leaders is fourfold:

1. Promote health with "common good" public health concepts including prevention and early intervention.
2. Take the lead in the healthcare of children and families.
3. Identify talent early through mentoring of younger women and girls. They were especially concerned about leadership that would succeed them.
4. Elevate public awareness of the relationship of oral health to systemic health. Nearly 150 million Americans lack dental insurance; that impacts both employment absences, school attendance and increases costs related to neglected care.

I wish to share five thoughts with you from "lessons learned" that you may find helpful:

1. **Pick your battles and don't sweat the small stuff.** Save your energy for critical issues and there will be many. Learn to say "no" – this is much easier said than done as you weigh opportunities and challenges that will become available to you in the future.
2. **Be prepared.** This is an old girl scout motto that I remember and wisdom from my surgery training. The best way to avoid an emergency is to be prepared for one.
3. **Be a thought leader.** Elevate the level of the discussion. Frame the issues in language that appeals to the interests of a broad constituency of stakeholders. Provide opportunity for the inclusion of new ideas and room for compromise.
4. **Avoid linear thinking and make way for new discovery.** We tend to plan – input, output, outcomes, impact. But, while our strategies are linear, we must think in terms of diverging and converging factors that alter the course, cause directional changes, and influence outcomes.
5. **Follow your passions and trust your intuition.** If it doesn't feel right, it is not right.

Aside from your daily obligations, find fulfilling activities – activities that make you laugh, bring joy to your life, connect you with people you don't normally meet, opportunities to make new friends, and share ideas and stories. I don't remember jokes, but I certainly enjoy a good joke [my son tells me, "Mom you can certainly ruin a good joke."].

As you juggle priorities, family, profession, self – remember that self is three dimensional – mind, body, spirit. We know a lot about body, we are learning more about mind through brain studies and imaging technology, but we have much to learn about the human spirit which we rely on especially in situations of grave danger and turmoil, but also in times of peace.

As the airline pilot tells you to fasten your seat belt before you fasten children's or help others. I advise you to **take care of yourselves so that you may help others in need as energetic, compassionate leaders in the future.**

Thank you and best wishes!



"You will be expected to build bridges while mending fences, to lead as you follow, to lift up as you are burdened, and to educate as you continue to learn." - Jeanne Sinkford



Diane Magrane at ADEA's 4th International Women in Leadership Conference in Brazil, with dental ELUM attendees including 2 past presidents of ADEA (Lisa Tedesco, Pamela Zarkowski) and its current president (Sandra Andrieu). In the photo, from L to R: Francis Stavropoulos, Diane Magrane, Pam Zarkowski, Cherae Farmer, Ana Lopez, Lisa Tedesco, Marilyn Woolfolk, Sandra Andrieu