

## **Stepping Stones to Leadership**

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We need nurses to accept the call to leadership to achieve Sigma's mission of improving the health of all people. Nurses function as leaders daily by inspiring, educating, and advocating for patients, families, communities, student nurses, and colleagues. It is time for all of us to self-reflect on the contributions we are making to Sigma. What role are you playing to fulfill the mission of Sigma? Why not use the leadership skills that you already have or are developing to make a global impact by volunteering as a Sigma leader? While there is no blueprint for leadership in all situations, there are stepping stones to becoming an effective Sigma leader. Let us discuss a few of them.

A foundational stepping stone to leadership is personal power, defined as values, knowledge of self, experiences, inner strength, emotional intelligence, focus on serving others, and transcending ego constraints. Self-knowledge is critical in understanding your deeply held values and experiences that created them, controlling one's own emotions, and then seeking to understand the emotions of others, discovering the essence inside to guide your purpose as leader. Personal power is a prerequisite to empowering others (Jenkins, 2019). Because leadership is focused on developing the strengths and successes of others, another important stepping stone to leadership is empowerment. Kanter (1977) coined the term empowerment in organizations through moving the definition of management beyond hierarchical control to describing benefits of involving workers in decision making. Leaders who empower others recognize strengths in followers and provide structures and resources that allow them to flourish, engage in work, and participate joyfully.

*My genuine interest in people and empowerment is my first step to leadership. Like nursing, leadership should be person-centered. It all started in 1990 when as a student leader, I volunteered to organize free health services for underserved rural and urban communities and victims of disasters in the Philippines. This experience reaped intangible rewards of joy, connectedness, and the desire to help more people. Thus, I became a community nurse leader involved in advocacy for equity and for better health services for poor communities. My decade-long advocacy work was recognized by award-giving bodies and I was subsequently invited to teach at the University of the Philippines. Here I developed my research and scholarship skills. I was introduced to Sigma through a research conference in Hong Kong and became a Pi Iota Chapter member in 2010.*

*I moved to New Zealand in 2010 and the succeeding years were characterized by exciting cultural experiences as my scholarly work was consistently selected for oral presentation in Sigma's yearly International Nursing Research Congresses. Sigma helped me hone my public speaking skills and confidence. Sigma also provided opportunities to moderate research sessions which facilitated networking that is vital in leadership roles. My perseverance paved the way for me to be trusted by Sigma members and elected to a four-year leadership term. So, what are you waiting for? Step forward and be Sigma's next leader!*

---Monina Hernandez

Self-efficacy is an individual's judgment of his or her ability to perform a given behavior. Knowledge and skills are critical, but not sufficient for competent performance. Individuals who perceive themselves to be efficacious tend to use relevant skills and knowledge to enact specific behaviors in a variety of circumstances. Importantly, self-efficacy beliefs determine behaviors that an individual will initiate, the amount of effort expended to reach a valued outcome, and the length of time one will persist in the face of obstacles. Confidence is frequently interchanged with the concept, self-efficacy. Likewise, four sources influence self-efficacy: performance accomplishment (mastery), vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1986). One learns vicariously by observing a competent and engaging leader. Credible leaders positively influence self-efficacy through verbal persuasion such as corrective feedback. Physiological arousal is the somatic response to a behavior which is used to assess one's leadership ability (Bandura, 1997). Feelings of joy upon completing a leadership task can increase one's self-efficacy. Finally, mastery or individual performance is the most

influential source. Performing leadership responsibilities successfully significantly enhances self-efficacy and future performance (Bandura, 1986). Observing, listening, performing, and being aware of feelings of joy related to leadership performance are avenues to becoming and being a Sigma leader.

Nursing has been recognized as one of the most trusted professions for a long time and it is only logical that trust is a stepping stone to leadership. Hence, nurse leaders should promote and create environments of trust for their teams. According to Kouzes and Posner, trust is a key component of human relationships and to the health of all people. When trust is the norm, it promotes an environment of shared decisions, increased innovation, profitability, and demonstrated concern for others (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The leader gains trust by being upfront about what they stand for, hope for, and value. Being a leader requires actions such as active listening and assisting with problem solving, not just talk. Leaders that create environments of trust allow their teams to freely contribute their ideas and inspires them to be their best selves. Leaders make decisions that are in the best interests of their teams and not just themselves. As human beings we are wired to trust and if this is missing, it hinders our creative ability (Kouzes & Posner). Trust enhances our ability to make connections needed to increase our collaborative efforts focused on improving the health of human beings globally.

*Deciding to take the step to become part of leadership is oftentimes daunting. Yet, Sigma's persistence with email reminders and guidance helped me to make up my mind. Daunting yes, but with my colleague's encouragement, I completed the first step - an online application at The Circle. I questioned Sigma's knowledge of its members living way over in Jamaica and uttermost parts of the globe. I questioned who could possibly suggest my name! I wondered how I would fit in amongst all the brilliant leaders in Sigma. I realized Sigma's demonstration of their commitment to include leaders in their leadership structure from across the globe. I reflected on what drives me, my thoughts on leadership, my aspirations, and the leadership challenges for my region. Elated to be up for nomination, I was energized to complete all my university and family responsibilities with enough time to commit to the development of the nursing profession. I appreciated the clarity of steps that Sigma outlined from start to finish for the nomination and election process. I am now on the inside looking out and I am convinced*

*that this leadership team will make significant steps towards achieving Sigma's global mission. Thanks to Sigma for unearthing what lied buried.*

*--Pauline Anderson-Johnson*

So what step are you taking to become a Sigma leader? The time is now. Leadership development is a life-long journey, one is never a satisfied great leader, but always evolving and improving. The Leadership Succession Committee is committed to infuse joy as we seek, motivate, support, and prepare members for elected volunteer positions. Our role is to identify active members who are ready and willing to serve, mentor potential candidates in the nominating process, select nominees for a diverse international biennial ballot, and oversee the election process.

Every two years we fill the ballot voted on at the Biennial Convention. This includes a President-elect, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Directors-at-Large , Regional Chapters Coordinating Committee Chair, Governance Committee members, and Leadership Succession Committee members. There is no better time to serve than now!

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