

Our women leaders are human capital that enrich our academic communities and contribute to a more inclusive environment for all students and faculty.

In this month's letter, Dr. Rick Valachovic, Executive Director of the American Dental Education Association, talks with graduates of the only in-depth national program that focuses on leadership development for women faculty in academic medicine, dentistry, and public health.



From 0 to 13 in 13 Years: ELAM's Impressive Track Record in Preparing Women for Leadership

The Hedwig van Ameringen [Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine® \(ELAM®\) Program for Women](#) is now in its thirteenth year preparing women faculty in academic health centers for senior executive leadership positions, and the results are striking. Thirteen U.S. dental schools, almost a quarter of the total, can boast women deans today, and close to 600 ELAM graduates are waiting in the wings, ready to move into senior leadership in U.S. and Canadian schools of dentistry, medicine, dentistry, and public health.

Headquartered at the Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the ELAM program has achieved a high level of success by maintaining a steady focus on three principal goals: to advance women to leadership positions, to support and sustain women who attain leadership positions, and ultimately to change the culture of academic health care so that the contributions of women are recognized and valued.

What makes ELAM special? According to Rosalyn Richman, the program's co-director, ELAM is more intensive and goes into greater depth than other leadership programs. The program now focuses exclusively on medicine, dentistry, and public health. Its three-session format gives Fellows a chance to apply their learning throughout the fellowship year. Classes are broken down into geographically related peer-learning communities that communicate regularly, sometimes monthly, both during and after the fellowship year. Alumnae interact directly at ADEA and AAMC meetings, through collaborative grants and projects, and at group-initiated reunions and retreats.

The program also places a heavy emphasis on ensuring that Fellows succeed once they return to their institutions. ELAM requires a commitment on the part of the sponsoring institution to provide Fellows with opportunities that can be a springboard to the next level of leadership, and supervising deans must attend a forum on emerging issues at the close of the fellowship year so that they, too, have a direct experience of the program.

"For some of these deans, it's the first time they've sat in a high-level meeting where half the participants are women. It's really a cultural immersion," says Roz. One dean was so excited by what he saw that he is now serving on the ELAM faculty.

ELAM also gives participants insights into how administrators and policymakers think. Dr. Sharon Turner, Dean of the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry and an ELAM participant in the early years, welcomed this broader perspective.

"Before I became a dean, I never paid attention to what was going on at the state legislative level or at the national level," says Sharon. "Now I understand that it's not just a matter of how good the school is. The states must balance competing interests, and they need to take a pragmatic approach to funding our institutions."

This is Sharon's eleventh year as a dean, first at Oregon Health & Science University and now at the University of Kentucky. Sharon values the ELAM program for giving her the confidence to apply for the dean's position and a network of women with good judgment and similar experience, which she can use as a sounding board. That continuing connection with the program has prompted Sharon to serve as both a

Board member and President of SELAM, the alumnae association founded by ELAM graduates.

ELAM dental graduates have played key roles in SELAM's leadership and have proven to be effective recruiters for ELAM. In fact, Roz Richman reports that alumnae bonds are so strong that she is in touch with all but a handful of the program's 570 graduates.

ELAM was started in 1996 as a program for women in medical education under the leadership of our colleague Dr. D. Walter Cohen, who was then Chancellor of Drexel University College of Medicine. Women in dental education were invited to participate on a limited basis the following year, thanks in part to the efforts of Dr. Jeanne Sinkford, Associate Executive Director and Director of the ADEA Center for Equity and Diversity. She remembers well the challenges that women in our community faced at that time. "In the larger community of health sciences, women's leadership in dental education needed to be developed. We didn't have many women associate deans. Some women were assistants to the dean, but their titles did not represent their value to their institutions. We thought about having a separate women's leadership program, but I felt that medical and dental education should be together so that emerging leaders could have a chance to meet and develop their skills in a competitive arena."

ELAM agreed, and ADEA nominated two candidates for a pilot effort to include women in dental education: Dr. Lisa A. Tedesco and Professor Pamela Zarkowski. At that time, Lisa was Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the University of Michigan School of Dentistry. Today she is Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost, Academic Affairs-Graduate Studies, at Emory University in Atlanta. Pam, an attorney and dental hygienist by education, has been Executive Associate Dean of the University of Detroit Mercy (UDM) School of Dentistry and currently serves as Acting Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at UDM.

Today women from dental education compete with women in medicine and public health for ELAM's 48 available slots, almost double the number in its inaugural class. Since the program's inception, 43 dental Fellows from 34 dental schools (or 61% of all U.S. dental schools) have participated in ELAM. Comparatively, 530 Fellows from 111 U.S. medical schools (87%) and five Canadian medical schools (29%) have taken part. We hope that all U.S. dental schools will have ELAM Fellows on campus in the not too distant future.

Although proportionally fewer women in dentistry have gone through the program, their successes have been striking. Of the first six original dental Fellows, three have made become deans and one is a provost. Today 22% percent of U.S. dental schools have women deans, compared to 12% of U.S. allopathic medical schools. And while no ELAM graduates have become the chief elected officer of the Association of American Medical Colleges, two dental Fellows, Lisa Tedesco and Pam Zarkowski, have served as President of ADEA. It's also worth noting that 26% of all the women deans serving in U.S. schools of medicine, dentistry, and public health are ELAM alumnae. That's an impressive track record.

Jeanne Sinkford believes that the timing of the program was fortuitous. "Ten years ago, we did not have the women with the credentials, preparation, and willingness to apply for these positions. We've had a lot of deanships open in recent years, and thanks to ELAM, many of these positions have been filled by women."

Lisa Tedesco also credits ELAM's efforts to foster women's leadership with helping to create a rich pipeline of women that institutions can draw from when looking to recruit top academic talent.

"In the health professions and in academia, careers are tremendously intensive," Lisa adds. "Over the last decade, we've seen the development of clinical and research ladders in health professions education. This has come about because of programs and organizations working to make academia more welcoming to women, and ELAM can take credit for part of that." This is a promising development, especially in light of the fact that academic health centers have been slow to catch up with the corporate world when it comes to providing the kind of flexibility that might draw women and young people to academic careers.

Dr. Sandra Andrieu has been at Louisiana State University (LSU) since her days as a dental hygiene student. She was the first dental hygienist at the LSU School of Dentistry to earn a Ph.D., and in 1994, she became the first woman to be promoted to the senior ranks of the dental school when she was named Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at that institution. Although another woman served as Dean of Educational Services for a few years, today Sandra remains the only woman in her school in a senior leadership role.

Sandra learned about ELAM when she began attending ADEA meetings. There she met other women academic deans, and that's when she says "the light bulb went off. I had the preparation and the opportunity to serve as an academic dean, but I lacked mentors and guidance." Early on she was invited to attend a SELAM reception, and there she found role models among the ELAM alums.

"They were amazing. They opened my eyes and, without even knowing it at first, they became my mentors." Today Sandra is also an ELAM Fellow. Despite the fact that she began her fellowship only days after being evacuated from Hurricane Gustav, she left the first session invigorated.

"I had a narrow focus regarding my future, but after meeting with my ELAM mentor, I realized I have a broad array of options in higher education." ELAM's superb reputation provides an entrée for its Fellows in the upper echelons of academia and government. Sandra especially looks forward to the opportunity ELAM provides to meet with senior administrators throughout her university and on the boards that oversee higher education in her state.

The relationships between ELAM alums can be transformative, not only for individual Fellows, but for their institutions as well. Jeanne Sinkford agrees. "We know that our women leaders are human capital that enrich our academic communities and contribute to a more inclusive environment for all students and faculty." Indeed, ELAM aspires to create a "critical mass" of women in high-level leadership positions in academic health centers so that the culture of those institutions will begin to evolve in ways that support women's inclusion at the highest levels.

One campus where ELAM's impact is very much in evidence is the Medical College of Georgia (MCG). Dr. Connie Drisko is a 2001 ELAM alum and Dean of MCG's School of Dentistry. MCG has six ELAM alums, three in dentistry and three in medicine, with a fourth on the way. Four of the campus's five deans are women, as are many of the vice presidents.

Many of you know that Connie is Chair of the ADEA Women's Affairs Advisory Committee, which serves as the screening committee for ELAM dental Fellows. She tells me that ELAM alums have been extraordinarily supportive of each other during the recruitment process on her campus, but she'd like to see them do more. "We have a strong network at MCG. That has potential, but we haven't fully leveraged that potential yet."

"Each of us in leadership has a responsibility to mentor and bring along the next generation. It's clear that consciously promoting and mentoring women has had a positive effect. How much longer will we need to do that? I don't know, but it didn't just happen on its own."

Of course women's leadership does not need to stop at the decanal level. Kathy Atchison, a 2005 ELAM dental Fellow, serves as Vice Provost for Intellectual Property and Industry Relations and as Associate Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of California at Los Angeles. Sandra Andrieu is contemplating a range of possibilities in higher education, and Sharon Turner can envision a day when she might relocate to Washington, D.C., to work on health policy. Many women also choose to take advantage of other competitive programs, such as the [American Council on Education \(ACE\) Fellows Program](#) and the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Fellowships Program](#).

For a list of other leadership programs open to women in dental education, visit the [ADEA Center for Equity and Diversity website](#). It also includes a complete list of ADEA's ELAM alums.



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