

## **AAHSL Future Leadership Committee Annual Report – September 30, 2020**

The Leadership Fellows program is in its eighteenth year and while it continues to be successful it has faced some challenges this spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **2019/2020 Class**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2019/2020 program underwent major changes in how it delivered its leadership content. The April Leadership Institute was cancelled due to restrictions on travel, stay at home orders and the financial impact of the pandemic. Rather than move to an online format, the decision was made to combine it with the Capstone program in September. The initial plan was to extend the length of time in DC by 2 days, creating a new agenda that wove the leadership topics from the Institute throughout the traditional Capstone presentations from NLM, ARL and other associations.

However, it became clear in May that the long-term impact on libraries and their staffs, universities and budgets would be continuing throughout the summer and into the fall. Most of the fellows and mentors would still be facing travel restrictions or health concerns. The FLC made another difficult decision – recommending cancellation of the in-person event in September and moving to an online and combined Institute and Capstone. The FLC chairs considered options for minimizing the financial impact on AAHSL due to hotel cancellations and proposed scheduling the 2022 Institute in DC at the hotel that would have been used for this year's Institute and Capstone. The negotiations with the hotel were successful and the program moved forward with an online Zoom version of the leadership events, including an online graduation.

Traditional Capstone presentations from NLM, ARL and AAMC were integrated with the leadership content covered in the Institute. For example, a session on strategic thinking followed presentations by NLM staff that included discussions about their internal and external plans and priorities in response to their new strategic plan. AAMC and ARL speakers covered strategic priorities but also talked about working with their stakeholders and external groups. The sessions after those presentations focused on communication at the executive level and power and influence. Eight of the Zoom sessions were held on four (4) consecutive days from September 8 through 11, with two remaining sessions on Sept. 21 (information policy and AAHSL) and Sept. 25 (organizational culture and leading with an equity lens). Handouts were mailed in advance and both fellows and mentors found it helpful to have the paper copies available. Graduation was held via Zoom Webinar on Sept. 24 in the evening. Certificates of completion and the traditional gift of a class photo were mailed in advance.

As expected many of the leadership topics and discussions referred to the challenges of the current environment. Discussions often focused on positive leadership behaviors observed during COVID as well as how communication, managing change, and using power and influence were important during these times. Mentor prepared case-studies provided real-world leadership

situations and experiences. One session focused on “respiring” the organization: rebuilding commitment during turbulent times. The diversity session was furthered broadened to focus on the role of the leader in social equity that would be a focus of concerns for most institutions going into the future.

In preparation for the September curriculum, the program director worked very closely with Kathryn Deiss, program faculty, on the changes needed to deliver the content and Capstone presentations in a cohesive and effective manner on the Zoom platform. Practice sessions with Zoom allowed them to experiment with breakout rooms and other features.

The Zoom breakout rooms were a great success and were used for discussions of the case studies and for other leadership topics. The program director worked on breakout assignments that ensured all the fellows got to work together, as well as with every mentor. The plus-delta comments were positive about how the breakout rooms were used.

The mock interviews were also done through Zoom using breakout rooms for the individual interviews and feedback sessions. The standardized interview questions and feedback form were used. As in the past, fellows reported that they learned more about the types and higher-level questions that are asked during a director’s interview and they received tips about how to improve their interview skills. It was also practice for the increasing use of virtual interviews for vacant positions.

While the April Institute cancellation was disappointing, the program used the available time for virtual sessions in April and May to explore the leader’s role during a crisis, with MJ Tooley and Anne Seymour, respectively, helping with the discussions. These timely and relevant sessions allowed the fellows and mentors to explore their experiences and the role of leadership during a crisis, as well as discussing the challenges of recovery.

The evaluation of this year’s program will focus on how well an online format worked for the fellows and mentors. The questionnaire will focus on the technology as well as the content of the sessions and how well the program met its goals of building community and curricular content. In addition a brief evaluation (plus-delta) was verbally done at the end of each day of the Institute/Capstone.

### **2020/2021 Class – On Hiatus**

Another major decision was made about the 2020/2021 LFP class – the program was placed on hiatus for one year. As the Future Leadership Committee (FLC) discussed the immediate and long-term impact and recovery from the pandemic, a the committee recommended to the AAHSL Board that the program be placed on a one-year hiatus. The decision was based on the likelihood that qualified candidates would not have the bandwidth and institutional support to consider applying to the program as well as the long-term financial pressures on their libraries and institutions. The AAHSL Board approved the hiatus and the LFP has worked with NLM on what this means for the coming year in terms of their support.

### **2021/2022 Class**

The FLC plans to focus on increasing the diversity of the fellow's applicant pool when recruitment begins in 2021. The application brochure has been extensively revised to reflect the program's commitment to diversity and provide a sense of the inclusiveness that the program tries to engender throughout the program. The brochure will be reviewed by NLM and the AAHSL DEI Committee in addition to FLC members. The FLC has also identified additional strategies for reaching potential applicants.

### **Other Activities**

Pat Thibodeau has agreed to remain as the program director during the hiatus year and assist the FLC in recruiting a new program director in spring 2021 and the new class in the summer.

The Committee will also begin discussions with Kathryn Deiss about succession planning for leadership faculty in future years. While Kathryn plans to remain with the program for several years, the FLC needs to begin thinking about her replacement in the future.

The FLC submitted a proposal for establishing a diversity scholarship for people of color who want to explore the role and career pathway for becoming a health sciences library director.

The Committee also drafted a proposal for a "buddy" system for new directors is being submitted to the AAHSL Board for consideration.

Committee members also recommended holding discussion sessions for new directors so they can share experiences and advice. Another suggestion was to offer one of the Institute topics – "Respiriting the Organization" after a crisis/change – to all directors. The FLC has reached out to the AAHSL Program Committee about working together on these ideas.

The MLA CE course "Do You Want to be a Library Director" was not offered in 2020.

The FLC submitted to NLM the final 2018/2019 program report as well as the mid-year report in May 2020. Data regarding director appointments and vacancies has continued to be collected as well.

Sept. 30, 2020

### **Submitted by:**

Janice Jaguszewski, Chair  
Terrie Wheeler, Chair Designate  
Heidi Heilemann, Immediate Past Chair  
Patricia Thibodeau, Program Director

Cc: AAHSL Board liaison, Kelly Gonzalez