

MaryJane Lewitt, PhD, CNM, FACNM
Candidate for ACNM President Elect, 2019
December, 2018

Nomination Questions for ACNM Candidates

- After reading the position description, do you still agree that you are interested in running?

Yes

1. What makes you interested in this position? What qualifies you for this position?

I am very honored to have this opportunity to bring my experience to serve the membership of the ACNM. I have volunteered and held leadership positions in the ACNM for the past 25 years at all levels: working on national initiatives, chairing multiple national-level committees, and leading chapters/affiliates. I did this while working as a midwife in full scope clinical practice, then adding teaching and administration. I understand what it is to live and breathe midwifery, from a clinical perspective, from an academic perspective, and from a professional organization perspective. In all these roles, I have personally seen the impact of lack of diversity and communication in our clinical practice, in our education programs, and in our organization. I have talked with practicing and future midwives from the east coast to the west coast and have heard amazing stories of how we, despite differences, are all dealing with similar problems. The issues confronting us today are significant and will require us to talk openly, without preconceived outcomes. We need to listen to each other and work together to get the future that we envision... a future of midwives working in unity to improve the health and wellbeing of mothers and families.

- Undertaking an elected position is a huge time commitment. Do you see any responsibilities that you might not be able to carry out?

As your President Elect, this role will be my priority. In my career, I have had the opportunity to work with midwives across our amazing country, from the east coast to the west coast. I have learned from you in your clinical sites, listened to your stories, and worked with you to tackle the barriers that make it more difficult to meet the needs of women and their families. In this role, I will be able to work for you in a new way. If we all had unlimited time, then it would be easy to shape our future. But we don't, and clinical practice, academic education, and research all take time and concentration. So you need a leader, who is able to bring an understanding of your day to day work to the national level. I will step up, to bring your voice to the table with our professional colleagues and collaborators. While you work every day providing midwifery care, I will bring your voice into the national work of the ACNM, as we all collectively support the future of midwifery. As you care for women and their families, I look forward to using my time to support the future of midwifery.

- What ACNM Strategic plan commitments best embody your personal philosophy?

The ACNM Strategic plan presents a vision for our collective future. In my discussions with midwives across this country, the goals of diversity and inclusion, leadership development, research, interprofessionalism, and communication, are goals that we all embody and reflective of the complex issues we confront daily. These are not lofty goals; they start with each and every midwife, at the moment of providing care to women and families.

As a professional organization, our ACNM has the responsibility to bring clarity to these goals and provide tools to members, so we can all work together. Our organization must make the benefits of membership clear. The power of midwives coming together to solve problems is amazing. We must recognize and confront microaggressions, stereotypes, and preconceived notions that create barriers in our practice, our collaborations, our education, and our research. We have the technology to bridge distance, to support each other, to collaborate across states, across the country, across professions, and across organizations. The key to all of this is open and ongoing communication. We have always listened to women, but we also must listen to each other. Achieving these goals, via collaboration and communication, will bring to reality the ultimate goal of “A Midwife for Every Woman.”

- In changing purpose to impact, what tools or skills do you have to promote success?

Positive change begins at the level of each individual. But you are not alone. Your leadership is responsible for listening and collaboratively problem-solving, so we can develop the tools to help make optimal change our reality. I have had the opportunity to learn leadership skills from a myriad of leaders and organizations, including Harvard and Disney, and bring these skills to my practice and my profession. These opportunities make one thing very clear: that true leadership begins with recognizing the impact of each person. Each of us adds to our successful future: as we embody and share midwifery with the women and families we care for; as we role model midwifery for the future midwives; and as we educate colleagues and neighbors. There are amazing things happening at national and international levels with multiple groups, but this information needs to be at the fingertips of individual midwives in the trenches. We have the capacity to make this happen: phone call updates, webinars, newsletters, listservs. Midwives are amazing. We are privileged to share very personal moments. The inspiration that comes from those moments is what inspires us. This inspiration brings to each of us, the momentum to achieve our goals.

- What ideas do you have for spreading innovation and improvement?

Walt Disney once said “It takes people, to make the dream a reality.” Bringing people together requires us to listen to each other. It is the responsibility of your leadership to seek your viewpoints while conveying innovation. Our leaders must confront many complex challenges and often these change rapidly. It is our responsibility to seek information and thoughtfully consider how decisions will impact the ‘frontline’ midwife. Typically, solutions are more obvious to those who are closest to the situation. I will set up open communication times, where all members have access to ask questions and get answers. We have the technology to do this and we can utilize multiple tools to communicate, collaborate, and make the work of each member easier. New midwives are very savvy in these areas and can be leaders with these solutions. The practice of midwifery is evolving and becoming more complex; we need to support each other at all levels of experience and share our knowledge and leadership. Disney said “If you can dream it, you can do it.” We *can* turn our goals and dreams into the reality of tomorrow. I look forward to leveraging my abilities to share and support our collective vision. Thank you.