

# Impact of the American Organization of Nurse Executives' Development Programs

*Erik Martin, DNP, RN, CNML, and M. T. Meadows, DNP, MBA, RN, CENP*

Developing future leaders is a key priority and measured success factor for the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE). AONE has a strong history of investing in talented individuals who are believed to hold potential, have had early career success, and are known to collaboratively lead through the ever-shifting landscape of health care. AONE aims to remain relevant and informative to its members, regardless their tenure in nursing or level of experience in leadership. In the past 10 years of AONE's half century, an added focus on emerging and novice leaders has gained prominence. This adds to a tradition that focus on experienced leaders who have looked to AONE to fine tune skills or learn to use new leader tools as their environment evolves. The AONE Foundation programs—Emerging Nurse Leader Institute, Nurse Manager Fellowship, Nurse Director Fellowship, and the AONE Annual Meeting—allow AONE opportunity to influence the development of nurse leaders across a career continuum and to ensure that the next generation of talented leaders are versed in leadership competencies, resilient and prepared to lead as authentic individuals ([Table 1](#)). This paper highlights the successes of several individuals, including one of the coauthors, who have advanced their careers grounded in development gained through the AONE programs.



I, Martin, am fortunate to have been one of the up-and-coming leaders identified to participate in one of the first AONE programs—the AONE Foundation Nurse Manager Fellowship. This AONE Fellowship is a well-rounded year-long program that includes 4 face-to-face retreats and monthly check points.

Each of the 4 retreats had a specific focus. The first session is known across participants as “Nurse Manager Boot Camp!” It was a week full of learning about one’s self as a leader, identifying strengths, and refining the tools and skills needed to lead teams. The second retreat occurred during the AONE annual

**Table 1.** The American Organization of Nurse Executives Foundation Development Programs

Program	Description
<i>AONE Foundation Emerging Nurse Leadership Institute</i>	Emerging Nurse Leader Institute (ENLI) is an interactive program that combines lecture, discussion, experiential learning, and self-assessment. The program is designed to introduce leadership concepts to nurses beginning their leadership journey.
<i>AONE Foundation Nurse Manager Fellowship</i>	The Nurse Manager Fellowship is a year-long professional development program designed to provide an in-depth environment of learning. Nurse manager participants strengthen their current skills, acquire new competencies, and continue life-long learning needed for the next generation of successful nurse leaders.
<i>AONE Foundation Nurse Director Fellowship</i>	The Nurse Director Fellowship is a year-long professional development program designed to provide an in-depth environment of learning. Nurse leaders at the director level strengthen their current skills, acquire new competencies, and continue life-long learning needed for the next generation of successful nurse executives.
<i>AONE Annual Meeting</i>	The Annual Meeting is the premier education program of AONE. The program focuses on dissemination of research findings, innovations, and best practices in the area of nursing and health systems leadership, and provides an opportunity for nurse leaders to engage with colleagues.

meeting with a particular focus on nursing leadership globally and how leaders collectively advance the health of communities. The third retreat is traditionally held during the American Hospital Association's (AHA) Health Forum. This week provides fellows with outstanding opportunities to learn about health care both nationally and internationally, specifically through lenses in addition to nursing. The final retreat was in Washington, DC, and focused on health care policy and politics. Participants were provided with education, tools, and resources and then charged to visit Capitol Hill where participants met with individual state legislatures and advocated on a topic of health care important to the individual. Over the course of 1 year, I was offered opportunities to grow personally and professionally and to build a network of colleagues and resources that I still tap into today. In the end, I believe I am a more thoughtful, accountable, and competent leader because of the fellowship.

## INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES

Sharing stories of participants highlights understanding the impact and influence of the AONE programs. In interviews with program participants, we had the opportunity to hear from 7 nurse leaders who share their thoughts, experiences, and learnings from these programs. To frame the discussions, the Nurse Manager Learning Domains Framework (*Figure 1*) was used. As the leaders tell of their experiences, they discuss how they learned the science—managing the business, the art—leading the people, and creating the leader within themselves. The leaders interviewed as part of this paper are listed in *Table 2* and are as follows: Brandon “Kit” Bredimus, MSN, RN, CEN, CPEN, CNML; Ri Dorado, MSN, RN, CNOR; Jan Phillips, DNP, RN, CENP; Megan Seston, BSN, RN, CCRN-CMC; Jessica Walden, MSN, RN; Brian Weirich, DHA(c), MHA, RN, CENP; and Wendy Ungard, DNP, RN, NEA-BC.

## How did your experience help in your leadership development?

**Brandon “Kit” Bredimus:** I attended the AONE Foundation Emerging Nurse Leader Institute (Institute) session in Chicago in November of 2013. I had been a frontline nurse with no formal management experience before I was promoted to director of my unit in April of 2013. I was seeking every opportunity to learn and my chief nursing officer suggested I look into the Institute. It was a great investment and helped me form a foundation that was built upon later with other AONE offerings like Care Innovation & Transformation Program (CIT) and the AONE Fellowship.

Looking back, it is amazing to think how formative those early months were. Attending this program really helped me to identify my knowledge gaps. I realized that the old adage “I didn’t even know what I didn’t know” was true for me. Being exposed to the Nurse Manager Skills Inventory<sup>1</sup> for the first time was a great insight to how the domains were organized and each specific skill set identified. Learning the fundamentals of budgeting, quality improvement, and team engagement was critical to my future success as both a manager and a leader. I tend to be more data driven and analytical, so the concepts I learned about managing a budget (by understanding what all the moving parts were) really helped. I also used the behavioral interviewing skills learned at the Institute program to drastically improve my organization’s hiring process, and today, I teach those concepts to new managers and frontline leaders.

**Brian Weirich:** The quarterly retreats (part of the Fellowship) always consisted of a very full agenda. Every retreat brought the opportunity to meet and interact with speakers who are experts in their respective fields. These speakers consisted of nurses, authors, and other professionals.

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