

Illinois Psychological Association

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President-Elect Message

Beth Rom-Rymer, Ph.D.

Many elements have converged, today, to trigger my thinking about leadership. The IPA nomination season has just concluded and we are anticipating our spring election; I, along with many other members of the IPA leadership team, have just returned from the four-day APA State Leadership Conference in DC. As my term as president-elect is winding down, the time for me to undertake the responsibilities of the IPA presidency is approaching.

There are good leaders and strong leaders, powerful leaders, charismatic leaders, populist leaders, and autocratic leaders. I'd like to focus on the strong, democratic leadership model. What are some characteristics that that kind of leadership group possesses? Wendy Kopp, the founder and President of Teach for America has talked about these characteristics: perseverance in the face of challenges; the ability to influence and motivate others; problem-solving ability; critical thinking skills; the ability to operate effectively with a larger team; having respect and humility; sustaining high expectations for your organization; working relentlessly in pursuit of the organizational mission.

Many challenges face us psychologists in Illinois: insurance reimbursement victories and setbacks; legislative initiatives that need to be monitored and, perhaps, countered; engaging our state and federal legislators by developing relationships with them; keeping the Illinois Psychological Association financially strong; pursuing continuing education opportunities; growing our membership; maintaining an interested, engaged constituency; continuing to shape, enhance, and distinguish our identity as psychologists; understanding our competition and prevailing; forging new paths for psychological careers (interdisciplinary teams, primary care, the medical home, forensic and correctional venues, among many others); mentoring students and early career psychologists; training in the ethics of the new social media; training veteran psychologists in using new technologies in practice; attracting a diverse IPA membership; serving diverse Illinois communities; decision-making about significant social issues that affect psychologists and our patients and clients. We will persevere in the face of these challenges.

While the strong, democratic leadership of the IPA is highly motivated and dedicated to our organization, it is the capacity to influence and motivate others that distinguishes us from other less successful leadership groups. How do we influence and motivate others? Strong leadership motivates others through example and personal engagement, with both direction and nurturance.

The strong, democratic leadership group has the ability to operate effectively with a larger team. In the IPA, we have many small and large groups: our entire membership group, our listserv, our Council of Representatives, and our Committees and Sections. The most effective leadership group is able to manage all of these groups with great equanimity. Personal style usually dictates how the equanimity is achieved, but many leaders are able to succeed through a combination of effective group communication, one-on-one coaxing and cajoling, with a great deal of personal charm thrown in!

It is incredibly important to sustain high expectations for our state psychological association and our psychologists throughout the state. We are all very much aware of the educational and organizational psychology literature on expectations and performance. We, in the leadership of IPA, have the expectation that our Illinois psychologists and our state organization will continue to thrive and grow, even during periods of national, state, and city financial struggles. And as competition among all levels of mental health practitioners blooms, we, in leadership in IPA, will continue to provide support, in the form of insurance reimbursement negotiations with insurance and legislative leaders; collaboration with APA leaders; effective legislative lobbying; the initiation and formation of key alliances with other health provider organizations; abundant training workshops; and personal mentoring.



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Our leadership group certainly works relentlessly in pursuit of our IPA mission. In the last four years, our state organization has won or been affiliated with four awards from APA: Federal Legislator of the Year (Rep. Jan Schakowsky, 2008); State Legislative Leader of the Year (State Senator John Cullerton, 2010); State Association Diversity Award (2011); and Federal Advocacy Award (Dr. Patricia Farrell, 2011).

We pursue excellence and outstanding leadership and we will keep working to improve the public's recognition of our psychologists' level of top professional performance.

Leadership development is an ongoing process at IPA. Part of the leadership process involves dialogue with our members. Please email me your thoughts about leadership and IPA: docbnrr@gmail.com. ■
