

Letter from Executive Director Angela Ross, ND

31 July 2020

Let me start by expressing sincere gratitude to every person who has been part of my journey to this role. From my classmates at Bastyr who predicted that I would become heavily involved in this Association, to the membership who elected and re-elected me to the Board over the years, to the Board who encouraged and believed in my leadership: you have all played a part and I am so thankful.

The position of the Executive Director of the Washington Association of Naturopathic Physicians (WANP) is significant and significantly important to our profession, both in Washington State and beyond. I am extremely excited, grateful, honored, and humbled to be selected as the next leader of this vital organization. I recognize that I have large shoes to fill, and I am committed to doing my absolute best to fill them. As a naturopathic physician myself, I fully recognize the diversity of our profession, and my goal is to use this role to advocate for every one of us - no matter how or what modalities we practice or what our ultimate goals are for our own practices. There is room at this table for all of our viewpoints. We are unified in our collective goal to improve the overall health and well-being of our patients and communities. It is my intent to honor the history of our profession and the roots of our medicine, even as we must look forward in an ever-changing world.

As a way of introducing myself, Dr. Klausmeyer asked me to highlight some of my goals in taking on this position. Ultimately, my goal and my job is to support the Board of Directors in fulfilling the vision and mission of the WANP. I will work tirelessly and tenaciously to do so, with the following immediate efforts:

Annual Conference. I'm not sure if you've noticed yet, but our Annual Conference in October is the largest and longest we've ever undertaken! This has been under the incredible leadership of committee chair Dr. Anna Martin and her team of 16 (!) member volunteers. Our registrations have already far exceeded what they have been in years past, and we are building a foundation to become one of the most sought after integrative medical conferences in the nation. I will work hand-in-hand with this committee to help ensure smooth execution of the conference this year with an eye for building on this momentum in years to come. (Early Bird Registration ends today!)

Communications. You may have also noticed that we have been communicating a bit more lately! We have been working hard to bring you the most up to date information about coronavirus and recommendations from the Washington State Department of Health, local Public Health departments, the Board of Naturopathy, and other local and state offices. I will continue to communicate regularly with our membership - not only about public health but also about regulatory changes pertinent to our doctors, event announcements, continuing education opportunities, updates from the Board, and more.

Continuing Education. Our continuing education committee, led by Dr. Teresa Richter, has studied the new continuing education requirements and will ensure that our offerings help our members meet these requirements. The committee recently released a process by which other organizations can be approved for category 1 continuing education credits for NDs in Washington State. This is a huge step forward for us as an Association, as we will be able to provide even more opportunities for our membership to get a broad array of continuing education. Remember that we have been included by the Board of Naturopathy and Department of Health as a certifying body for these credits, so keep us in mind if you are organizing a conference and want to offer Washington State CE credits!

Fundraising. It is a fact that we need money in order to improve our member benefits, to further advance our legislative agenda, and to increase our offerings on basically all fronts. In the last several months, we have raised our sponsorship levels (THANK YOU to our sponsors that have moved along with us!), added several additional sponsor and member levels, and have highlighted a non-ND supporting membership option. In the coming months, I will be personally reaching out to all of our Association sponsors to check in with them, ensure their needs are being met, and determine if there are additional ways we can engage their support. I also intend to expand far beyond the naturopathic community in search of individuals and organizations that are passionate about what we do, but who have not previously been tapped for fundraising contributions.

Governance. I have already been working closely with Board President Dr. Kelsey Klausmeyer and Governance committee chair Dr. Kara Menzer to improve the health of the Board. We recognize that a healthy, well-functioning Board supports a healthy, well-functioning organization. We will continue to explore ways that the Association can invest in our Board through training - not only on roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors but also on effective communication, group problem solving, and healthy conflict resolution. We want to create an environment where our members are eager to serve on our Board, that Board elections are engaging, enthusiastic, and competitive year after year, and that our Directors feel well-supported and able to focus on driving the vision and mission of the Association during their tenure on our Board.

Legislative. We are expecting a big year for naturopathic physicians legislatively! Having just completed our second year with our new lobbyists, we are all ready and eager to take on the 2021 Legislative session. We've added several new passionate and well-connected members to this committee and we have developed and are cultivating a legislative champion who has expressed willingness and enthusiasm to help coach us to a legislative victory. Committee chair Dr. Jamie Doughty and I are committed to helping grow our grassroots participation to help progress our legislative agenda and will be utilizing our political advocacy software (Muster) to keep you all apprised of legislative meetings, opportunities to interact with your local legislators, political deadlines and happenings, as well as calls to action on behalf of naturopathic medicine. We are actively brainstorming many and various ways to increase engagement, build strong allies, and develop a bill that will be successful this year. I am also on the look out for any opportunities to increase naturopathic representation in surveys, stakeholder meetings, and policy making conversations to make sure that our government officials know that we are out here, what we can offer, and how we can support and be supported.

Marketing. We have been working to modernize and update our Association website and these efforts will be on-going. We have recently partnered with a company specializing in SEO and website design, so we expect to see increased traffic to our general website, our conference website, and to our findanaturaldoctor.com website all in the interest of promoting naturopathic medicine and helping patients find our doctors. I will work to develop contacts who are known and available for media interviews and we will be working on a series of videos to help engage patients, legislators, and the general public on multiple platforms. Stay tuned and reach out if you have particular skills or passion in this arena!

Membership. Under the direction of committee chair Dr. Mohammad Shegeft and the Membership Committee, the WANP executed a substantial Membership Survey a few months back. I will be working with Dr. Shegeft to get the results of that survey communicated to our membership in the coming weeks, and the Board and I will be looking to these survey responses to help guide us as we do the work of this member-driven organization. We are also re-evaluating our current member benefits and we are committed to improving on and adding to the benefits that we already offer. I want to develop and

maintain clear paths for constructive feedback by membership, to help the Board and I understand where we are meeting or exceeding your expectations and where we could do more. We intend to conduct a targeted membership drive in 2021, so be on the lookout for communications around that next year and let us know if you can help!

Networking and Collaboration. I am well aware that many have come before me and many lessons have already been learned. I intend to utilize the people and resources that I have available to me to avoid “re-creating the wheel.” I love networking and building community and intend to bring these skills fully into this role - building bridges, supporting and collaborating with other organizations with similar missions as the WANP, and working to help unify our profession - even as we are all so very different.

Operations and Staffing. I am already in the midst of a deep dive into Association operations and processes to help determine where we could become more efficient. I will be researching Association Management Software and reaching out to my peers (in our profession and beyond) to learn best practices and to identify ways to strengthen our processes. As part of this, I will be paying attention to our staffing needs to determine when and where we could use additional targeted support to further advance our profession.

Student Affairs. Our office relocation to Bastyr will undoubtedly pave the way for increased collaboration with the brilliant and passionate naturopathic medical students there. These students are the future of our medicine and I will work with our current student representative, Justice Erikson, to engage and mobilize them as best as I can. I have already lectured in the Jurisprudence courses to help students understand the role and importance of the state associations and I will continue to make myself available for lectures, lunch and learns, presentation to the NMSA and other student organizations, and more to help prepare our students for active participation in naturopathic associations, wherever they end up.

There is a lot to be done, but the groundwork has already been laid. We are standing together, joined in the experience of this unique moment in history - not only of the world but also of our Association. I feel ready and able to help us emerge from this transition stronger, more grounded, and clear in our mission: to support our members and advocate for naturopathic medicine in Washington State.

Let's get to work!