

# Leadership for the Future—Vision, Values, and Practice

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Like so many events in our lives during recent years, the path to the 2022 American Kinesiology Association's (AKA) Annual Workshop was neither straight nor smooth. We started our planning after a successful virtual workshop in 2021 with the expectation we would return to an in-person meeting. Like the previous year, however, we found ourselves faced with the need to change our expectations and possibly switch to another year of virtual programming. The very successful 2021 program that focused on our discipline's future challenges and opportunities prompted several conversations about leadership in kinesiology. Dave Wiggins' closing session and subsequent article (Wiggins, 2021), which pointed out that our discipline perhaps lacks a requisite number of visionary leaders, informed many of these discussions. The discussions often pointed out the purported tension between being a visionary and the need for boots-on-the-ground pragmatism. In response, the program committee for the 2022 workshop decided to address the need for leaders to operate at multiple levels (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

At about midyear in 2021, we all had a sense of déjà vu as it became clear that COVID was not going away. As many institutions put the brakes on plans to return to in-person activities and events, the Executive Committee made its second difficult decision to deliver another virtual workshop. Fortunately, we had learned many lessons from 2021 and were in a much better position to deliver a high-quality experience (Smith & Fairbrother, 2021). Nevertheless, we also remained concerned about some of the important dimensions of the workshop that have been critical to its success over the years. While we felt confident that organizers and presenters had learned to adapt to the virtual platform, we wondered about the impact of another year without the in-person networking that has become a signature benefit of the workshop. The networking aspect of the workshop is central to our efforts because it provides informal professional development for leaders and reinforces the strength that kinesiology draws from the integration of a variety of subdisciplines (American Kinesiology Association, 2022b).

Our 2022 workshop theme of Leadership for the Future—Vision, Values, and Practice is consistent with Bolman and Deal's (2017) contention that "the challenges of today's organizations require the objective perspective of managers as well as the brilliant flashes of vision that wise leadership provides" (pp. 18–19). As with all our annual gatherings, the intent was to foster connections, discuss ideas around leadership, and promote AKA's mission of advancing kinesiology as a unified field of study (American Kinesiology Association, 2022a). We had healthy attendance with 124 participants from a range of degree-granting institutions.


Our membership includes departments with various combinations of associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Participation was well distributed across the main workshop, Dean's Forum, and the Undergraduate and Graduate Education Networks' preworkshop sessions. The Fireside Chat with Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko from the University of Illinois and Melanie Hart from Texas Tech University was very popular. This special issue of *Kinesiology Review* presents a collection of peer-reviewed scholarly articles based on workshop presentations and preworkshop sessions. They document and comment on subthemes that emerged from the call for presentations. Together, they provide insight into several dimensions of leadership in higher education and kinesiology related to the workshop's theme.

The opening article for this issue focuses on leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given what we have learned broadly about the likelihood of similar future health crises, the lessons drawn from this article are both timely and timeless. Elmer and Kamm (2022) describe efforts to assemble a pandemic response team that focused on serving the citizens of local campus and surrounding rural communities. The initiative Elmer and Kamm describe also serves as a helpful case study for effectively coordinating a broadly focused effort to serve rural college and university stakeholders. In the subsequent article, Liu et al. (2022) share the story of the successful implementation of a graduate student peer mentoring program at Texas State University. The initiative led to a greater sense of connection, which has been particularly important as we have seen how the isolation of the pandemic has impacted everyone's mental health.

Of course, the pandemic has not been the only challenge we have faced recently. In response to the murder of George Floyd and the heightened attention directed toward social justice, the association made its commitment to inclusiveness more explicit. It committed to highlighting the winners of a recently developed Inclusive Excellence Award and devoting one entire session of the workshop to topics related to diversity and inclusive excellence. The third article in this issue (Russell et al., 2022) emerged from that session. It turns our attention toward the power of allowing student perspectives to impact decision making related to inclusive excellence. It serves as an important reminder of how central students must be to our efforts in higher education, particularly with respect to our service to those from underrepresented groups. The following article returns to the topic of adapting to the constraints introduced by the COVID pandemic. Baker et al. (2022) used a case study approach to reveal insights gathered from transitions to the use of online and hybrid instructional modes. Focusing on three different universities' processes and the associated outcomes provides valuable insights into utilizing what have now become commonplace modes of instruction.

The next four articles report programmatic approaches to various topics relevant to kinesiology programs. The first is a

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paper by leaders from the Department of Kinesiology at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, the winner of the 2022 AKA Inclusive Excellence Award (Urtel et al., 2022). This article outlines the department's long history of achievements related to its commitment to exemplifying inclusive excellence. It touches on topics ranging from faculty expectations to connections between the department, the university, and campus culture. The next one in this group focuses on an effort to use coursework and experiences outside the classroom to imbue students with the knowledge they will need to thrive in their future professions (Guay & Simpson, 2022). It reports the results of an initiative at Capilano University to align experiential learning to better prepare graduates to enter industry. The third article in this programmatic set discusses a realignment of sport management programs, so they fit more closely with the norms of academic units with health science identities (George et al., 2022). As colleges and schools periodically reorganize, kinesiology departments sometimes find themselves within different configurations. This article provides timely perspectives to help leaders promote collaboration across disciplines and find their place when working with new partners. The fourth article reports on the benefits of utilizing experiential learning models to foster greater student engagement with the community (Shultz et al., 2022). Two case studies illustrate elements of programs that have successfully used this approach for kinesiology majors.

The final two articles focus on graduate student mental health (Mullin et al., 2022) and innovative curricular changes (Gross et al., 2022). In preparation for the Graduate Education Network's pre-workshop session, Mullin et al. surveyed kinesiology graduate students about their mental health, well-being, and perceived stress. The results confirm contemporary arguments for an increased focus on mental health. The article also shares information about potentially helpful interventions derived from the student responses. Gross et al. close the special issue with a report on an initiative to reconceptualize a foundational course delivered in the School of Kinesiology at the University of Michigan. The program was designed to break disciplinary boundaries and incorporate broadly applicable skills such as information literacy.

This special issue presents an informative look into the core elements of the 2022 AKA Workshop's theme, Leadership for the Future—Vision, Values, and Practice. The concepts, programs, and initiatives described all present a forward-looking vision for a stronger unified discipline of kinesiology. They are also firmly grounded in the authors' home institutions' values and many shared across the discipline. Finally, they present practical advice and concrete examples that serve AKA's mission to provide "resource materials and leadership and educational opportunities for university administrators in kinesiology" (American Kinesiology Association, 2022a). We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we did and that you take away key insights to help you improve your leadership.

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