THE NEXT GENERATION OF LONG-TERM CARE LEADERS WHITE PAPER

Professionals Leading Passionate Innovation

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The National Emerging Leadership Summit’s (NELS) purpose is to provide Generation X and Generation Y leaders in the field of health and aging services administration the ability to engage in discussions of current best practices with other leaders, meet with representatives of key professional organizations, gain an inside perspective on the legislative process, and explore solutions for attracting and retaining other Generation X and Generation Y leaders.

A consideration taken into account for the 2014 NELS Summit is that long-term care (LTC) organizations and services range from skilled nursing facilities, nursing homes, assisted living settings, continuing care retirement communities, home care, hospice, and adult day care services. Each of these settings target the same older adult population, but often lacks the coordination and integration needed to offer residents and their families a comprehensive mix of services. Many currently in the profession recognize there is a need to prepare future LTC leaders to work beyond silos of service and adapt to the changing consumer demands. An effort was made this year to expand the number of attendees that were exposed to a broader scope of services in their professional practice.

There continues to be a concern about the future supply of LTC administrators. Since 1998, the number of nursing home administrator examinations administered to candidates seeking initial licensure declined by more than 40%, with only a slight increase in recent years. The LTC profession is facing an employment cliff, with more people leaving the administrator profession than entering it. In addition, during testimony before the Senate Special Committee on Aging Forum, several professionals and professional organization representatives in the field of LTC administration remarked that the average age of persons taking the LTC administrator examination has been increasing in recent years. Several factors contributing to this turnover phenomenon include a fragile educational field, challenging societal views, a difficult and reactive regulatory environment, and a tendency to focus on management rather than leadership.

A steering committee composed of leaders from higher education, professional associations, and past NELS alumni tasked itself with addressing leadership challenges within the LTC administration profession. To address the many facets of the LTC administrative profession, the NELS continues to bring together today’s LTC leaders with a group of the most talented Generation X and Generation Y administrators. These uniquely positioned professionals are eager to transform the LTC administration profession, and also recognize and accept the responsibility to effect and realize the needed change. LTC administration requires the best and brightest individuals leading these critical human service organizations to provide and coordinate the highest level of care for elders.

The Summit combines current best-practices with a facilitated dialogue to provide a new perspective for both Summit participants and the broader field. The 2014 participants made further strides to advance the foundational work from the previous four Summits and emphasize their own agenda. The purpose of this White Paper includes: providing evidence and support for the professional field of health and aging services administration to advance
positive changes, set a foundation for planning the 2015 Summit; and serve as an additional reference for the current and next cohort.

Robert Burke, Ph.D., Professor, Health Services Management and Leadership Department at The George Washington University, opened the Summit by providing welcomes from the Dean of the School of Public Health and focusing on the importance of the LTC field and the profession. Dr. Burke highlighted the evolution of the NELS conference and discussed the current state of the field, including challenges to address. He also highlighted the importance of leadership practices designed to transform the LTC administrator field, and spoke of the main five areas of importance for participants: accountability in promoting the NELS conference, partnering with association representatives attending the Summit, leadership and mentoring opportunities for the future, establishing positions as community and thought leaders, and working to disseminate the work accomplished during the Summit.

A pre-Summit assessment of this year’s cohort, conducted by Dr. Douglas Olson, helped the participants get a good perspective of both the profile of the group and also highlighted their views of the field. He stressed that one of the key purposes of the Summit was to hear the voices of the next generation of leaders in the health care and aging services administration field. Attendees were also exposed to the efforts of the past four Summits, led by Kevin Hansen and Christy Whitehead-Kramer, including emphasis on the need to change the public perception of the profession using a variety of approaches; advancing a better, more consistent entry-to-practice standard across the country; encouraging greater mentoring opportunities; and solidifying the reach and scope of NELS initiatives. The 2014 participants also received information from a NELS representative from each of the past Summits to learn how and why the previous recommendations were identified and how those recommendations evolved from each of the NELS Summits.

As part of the fifth annual NELS, participants attended a legislative forum at the United States Senate, where policy experts and legislative staff shared their perspectives on the legislative process. Following this session, a group of individuals representing organizational and professional organizations, academics, and government entities related to aging services discussed contemporary implications of various aspects and challenges of the LTC administrator field. The panel of experts and practitioners convened to discuss and move forward recommendations made by the past cohorts of NELS participants and also addressed the emphasis on the challenge of the profession spanning various service lines. These two sessions and the subject matter covered are discussed in more detail in the accompanying NELS legislative policy brief.4

The Summit also benefitted from the presence of Michael Muetzel, MBA, Mx Marketing Management Solutions, an expert in generational differences, who shared his views and led a lively discussion on how generational values differ. He explored how these differences impact organizations and the critical relationship between staff members’ work environment and metrics for success. Mr. Muetzel also provided tips for integrating generational values and expectations into the workplace and each participant’s own profession, including the growing
need for effective succession planning. The participants brainstormed about initiatives that the current cohort of NELS participants would pursue, facilitated by Mr. Muetzel and Dr. Olson. The brainstorming session helped the attendees in their efforts to begin to identify priorities that they could focus on, given considerations of time and resources for each person involved. They also conducted a group exercise to help participants identify the strengths and challenges of NELS participants in advancing Summit initiatives. Each group of NELS participants developed initial recommendations of what the 2014 NELS work should encompass, with a substantial amount of commonality existing between the groups.

On the last day of the Summit, participants attended a panel session to provide updates on the work conducted to date on the past NELS recommendations by partnering organizations. Panelists included Marianna Kern Grachek, MSN, CNHA, CALA, FACHCA, President and Chief Executive Officer, American College of Health Care Administrators (ACHCA); Randy Lindner, MHSA, CAE, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Association of Long-Term Care Administrator Boards (NAB) and The NAB Foundation; Ruda Kadonoff, Vice President for Quality and Regulatory Affairs, American Health Care Association and the National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL); and Wendy Green, Managing Director of Leadership Development, LeadingAge. The panel highlighted the importance of joining national organizations to work toward an improved public image of the LTC administrator profession, and their respective organizations’ efforts to advance the development of LTC leaders. Several panelists also highlighted the importance of the Health Services Executive (HSE) initiative being championed by NAB. In addition, the panelists discussed the importance of mentoring, the progress to advance the standardization of educational and AIT experiences for young professionals entering the field, and highlighted their respective programs supporting younger professionals.

Following the panel session, NELS participants were able to spend time with each panelist in small groups to discuss the changing landscape of the LTC field and to have in-depth conversations about the broader topics discussed during the panel presentation. Each panelist highlighted important facets of the past NELS recommendations and the current cohort’s thoughts to inform the work of the attendees, along with the HSE initiative and the need to address the public persona of the LTC administrator profession.

To conclude the Summit, using the foundational work completed by the 2014 participants from the prior two days, Mr. Muetzel and Dr. Olson facilitated an intense group exercise to develop comprehensive action plans, which included enhanced accountability of NELS participants’ work toward attaining each committee’s goals, promoting the NELS program to attract future emerging leaders, strengthening the partnerships with key professional associations, serving as mentors for future LTC leaders and administrators currently receiving their collegiate education, increasing the activities to improve the public perception of the LTC field, and writing a white paper and legislative summary. These plans helped organize the group and established timelines for each committee to report progress made at various steps along the way to implementation of goals and actions necessary to achieve the set goals. The participants concluded the NELS by each personally expressing how inspired they were by the Summit.
Many of the participants committed to becoming more involved in associations, to not underestimate the power of collaboration, and to work toward improving the public image of LTC. This energy created the platform from which the work continues. Participants had the opportunity to access professional organization representatives and legislative staff during their D.C.-based summit. Throughout the Summit proceedings, participants had the opportunity to reflect on creating a better profession for themselves and future generations while at the same time leading organizations and systems with coordinated, high-quality and value LTC services.

These experiential approaches and mechanisms provided an environment and foundation for an engaging and thoughtful discussion about the future generation of LTC administrators. At the conclusion of this three-day Summit, these current emerging leaders developed detailed and methodical action plans, targeting specific areas of the long-term care administrator profession, to revitalize the profession. The action plans advance the recommendations and work of prior NELS cohorts and address a breadth of current issues to ultimately improve the profession and attract more potential administrators from Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z (i.e., those individuals under the age of 25).

As previously mentioned, the work of the 2014 NELS participants was to identify their own thematic areas by considering the prior NELS participants’ efforts, the other expert information and resources they were exposed to, and the various perspectives of their current cohort. The recommendations from the 2014 NELS participants included the following:

1. **The NELS cohort fully supported the HSE initiative being advanced by NAB.** Participants advocated for leveraging strategic partnerships between all NELS participants and the NAB organization. One of the key needs identified was to develop key messages and press releases to support this initiative. The participants were hopeful that NAB would allow them access to information that could help them access resources that would assist them with getting out a positive message sharing their commitment to this effort.

2. **Increasing awareness and improving perception of the profession working with the following key stakeholders: high schools, colleges, state boards, practicing administrators, related associations, and young professional groups.** The subgroup working on this area of emphasis identified a number of strengths, including a wide network of passionate individuals, possibilities of collaboration with stakeholders, and dynamic and robust set of career opportunities. The end goal determined by this group was to change the perception of what the LTC profession is and how it is viewed, so that young professionals would be motivated to enter this field. The co-sponsors of the Summit were identified as the initial organizations to focus on some efforts to help move his forward at both the state and national level.

3. **Sustaining NELS cohorts by re-convening no less than annually in order to continue ongoing accomplishment of NELS initiatives.** The group identified an approach of NELS reunions/gatherings at existing conferences held by the following organizations: ACHCA, AHCA, NAB, and LeadingAge. They suggested testing this approach with a couple of entities. The use of distance technology platforms was also suggested as a
cost-effective means of connecting NELS alumni on a regular basis. Lastly, they encouraged the steering committee to consider adding more NELS alumni to the steering committee going forward.

In the development of each of these recommendations, the Summit participants formed committees of interested participants to develop action plans to carry forward the work of previous Summits, yet with a dedicated commitment to these new initiatives formulated this year. The Generation X and Generation Y health care administrators in aging services participating in this Summit demonstrated their willingness and ability to transform the profession and strengthen the demand for NELS and its activities. The committees formed during the Summit designated timeframes to accomplish their goals and developed detailed plans to move the work forward to begin the process of transforming the long-term care administration profession.

The NELS steering committee and 2014 NELS participants reviewed this paper prior to its broader dissemination. The information noted in this document is a reflection of the voice of the 2014 NELS participants, yet there is an obvious interest in beginning an effort to invite all NELS participants and interested stakeholders to participate and support achieving the next phase of this important work. The NELS steering committee presented these recommendations to sponsoring organizations, and will use this white paper as a planning mechanism for the 2015 NELS Summit to continually cultivate future “professionals leading passionate innovation.”
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- Marianna Kern Grachek, President and CEO, ACHCA
- Jennifer Hagen, Administrator, Marquis Care at Powellhurst
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- Randy Lindner, President and CEO, NAB
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- Stephanie Ritter, Housing and Services Director at Benedictine Health System
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4 National Emerging Leadership Summit Legislative Policy Forum. “The Changing Face of Post-Acute Care and Services.” National Emerging Leadership Summit with support from the staff of the United States Senate Special Committee on Aging. 2014.
5 National Association of Boards of Examiners of Long-Term Care Administrators (2014). “NAB’s Professional Practice Analysis Aligns Leadership Core Competencies Across Expanding Continuum of Care.” (www.nabweb.org)

Any correspondence regarding this white paper, its recommendations, appendices, or the 2014 NELS summit should be sent directly to Dr. Douglas Olson, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, at olsondou@uwec.edu. For further information on the NELS summits, please visit: http://publichealth.gwu.edu/projects/national-emerging-leadership-summit.