

Current Perspective

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Passing the Baton

Any organization's success or failure is determined by its mission, culture, governance structure, execution of strategy and tactics, availability of critical resources, and sometimes by unforeseen or unpredictable external events (like COVID-19).

That is absolutely the case with the Academy. Important decisions of policy and strategy are made by the Board of Trustees with guidance from committees and staff totaling more than 1,000 people. But the CEO has ultimate responsibility for bringing strategic analyses to the board, overseeing communication and execution of board decisions, and operating the company.

Moreover, it is generally agreed upon that the most important single responsibility of a Board of Directors is to hire the company CEO. And, in turn, it is one of the CEO's most important responsibilities to prepare for a smooth transition to a successor.

After announcing to the Board of Trustees in April my intention to step down, a search committee was formed and a national call for candidates went out over a period of weeks. Key core criteria for successful consideration included fellowship in the Academy, reputation as an ophthalmologist, experience in Academy committee and/or board work, and successful leadership of a sizable ophthalmic practice or organization. Over the next three months, the committee interviewed a handful of outstanding finalist candidates and ultimately recommended to the Board of Trustees the appointment of Stephen D. McLeod, MD.

The last 13 years of my life have been all about the Academy. We've had some notable successes, and I absolutely want the Academy to have even greater impact under my successor's leadership. It means a lot to me who sits in that corner office and represents our profession. That's why I'm thrilled that it is Stephen McLeod!

Elsewhere in this issue of *EyeNet* you can learn more about him, but here's what I know after spending over a decade with him here in San Francisco and for many years on the Academy board in his capacity as *Ophthalmology* Editor-in-Chief.

Stephen is a practicing ophthalmologist and ophthalmic surgeon—a respected clinician and clinician-scientist with

an international reputation for excellence. He has had over a decade of success in the sometimes Byzantine politics of a state medical school, funding and building one of the largest and most respected eye institutes in the country. He has served years on the Academy Board of Trustees and understands health policy, business management, organizational development, and state and federal advocacy. And he is passionately committed to ophthalmology as a profession—and to its future.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he is a kind and honorable person. He is principled, and his integrity has never been in question. Stephen has no financial conflicts of interest that will impede his objectivity. And he's got a wonderful sense of humor, not taking himself too seriously. However, at the same time, having managed a large enterprise at the University of California, San Francisco with hundreds of staff, he is not afraid to analyze a complex challenge, seek advice, listen to other opinions, make a decision, communicate it, and own it.

Being the Academy CEO has been the pinnacle of my ophthalmic career. There have been some really big challenges, but I've enjoyed (almost) every one of them! I (like you) believe fervently that what we do is important, and we must secure the future for the next generation of ophthalmologists and their patients. I've been fortunate to work side-by-side with some amazing colleagues, to learn from them, and to become friends with them. I will continue to be actively engaged in our profession.

I wish Stephen McLeod the same sense of wonder and pride in our Academy's, our profession's, and our colleague's accomplishments that I have. I thank you all for your support during my time as CEO and for your dedication to ophthalmology.



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