

November 2023



Dear Friends,

I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to have partnered with you in serving as an agent of change for the past 34 years. Together we have achieved more than the wildest dreams of our original

founders: we set out to enhance the respect and compassion people experience receiving health care across Oregon, but we *never* expected that our programs would be replicated across the globe. Even with the immense success we have achieved together, I can assure you the Center's team is just getting started!

Five core elements have been critical to our success:

1. A visionary team of faculty, staff, and volunteers.
2. The financial support of hundreds of generous donors.
3. Strong collaboration and support from the OHSU Foundation, OHSU leaders, and the leaders of agencies and organizations across our state.
4. A commitment to our core values, especially of not accepting gifts from health care industry sources.
5. A robust business plan that launches new programs, refines those programs, and sustains them through endowment income.



Members of the Executive Committee in the early years of the Center for Ethics. From left to right: Phyllis Beemsterboer, MS, EdD; Ella Booth, PhD, MSB; Mary Denise Smith, RN, MS, CNS; Susan Tolle, MD; Gary Chiodo, DMD; Barbara Glidewell, MBS; Pat Dunn, MD.

Financially securing our programs through endowment income has been noted nationally by others as a key contributor to our success. We have been fortunate to thrive during times when many others have financially suffered. Endowment support means that the Center's programs will continue forever, ensuring that the legacies we have created together will continue to inspire and impact others long into the future.

I receive more than my share of credit for the Center's remarkable achievements when the majority of the work has been done by others. The Center has successfully recruited a talented and committed group of faculty, staff, and volunteer collaborators. Many of our achievements over the years are due to the collective efforts of our team. With their passion, drive, and expertise they are fully prepared to continue to build and innovate. It has been an honor to serve alongside them and alongside all of you.

While I am retiring on December 31, 2023, I believe that the Center will continue to grow and thrive under new leadership. The Provost has just announced the appointment of Dr. Katie Stowers as Interim Director of the Center for Ethics. I have the utmost confidence in Dr. Stowers—she has exceptional leadership skills, support of OHSU leaders, and support of all the Center's faculty and staff. I look forward to making introductions and sharing more of the Center's history with Dr. Stowers and, after a national search, the future director. I am grateful to have partnered with you in building the Center's strong foundation on which future generations of leaders can continue to build.

For now, I invite you to watch our new video, *Looking to the Future*, available on the Center's website: www.ohsu.edu/center-for-ethics



Susan W. Tolle, MD
Cornelia Hayes Stevens Chair
Professor of Medicine
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Our friendships continue and my gratitude is forever,

Susan





The Center for Ethics Leadership Team Prepares to Continue Building Upon the Foundation Established by Dr. Susan Tolle, the Center's Early Founders, and the Hundreds of Donors Who Have Supported the Center Over the Years. Pictured above (from left to right) are Drs. Tyler Tate, Katie Stowers, Cliff Coleman, Christine Mullowney, and Associate Director of Administration and Finance Safa Sohail.

Oregon POLST Program

When we started the Oregon POLST Program, our biggest goal was to create a way to ensure patients' carefully thought out wishes were honored across all care settings. Not only did we meet this goal, but with incredible ambition and drive we created a program that became a national model and leads the way in innovation, policy, and in empowering and protecting patients and their families. Some major milestones include: building a statewide coalition of stakeholders, creating a bidirectional state registry for documenting and accessing POLST forms across care settings, and receiving legislature approved funds for ongoing Registry operations within the state's budget. However, the memories I am most fond of are the stories shared with me by individuals whose family members' wishes were honored thanks to POLST. Even with all of these accomplishments, there is still much work to be done under the gifted leadership of Dr. Christine Mullowney—building community partnerships, building a new committee that better represents community stakeholders, enhancing protections for patients living with developmental and intellectual disabilities, and empowering people whose first language is not English or who have lower health literacy.

Professionalism and Comfort Care

Dr. Miles J. Edwards volunteered for years with the Center for Ethics and had a passion for the control of suffering, especially when life support was being withdrawn. He was a true senior statesman on the Ethics Consult Service and in advocating for the growth of palliative care teams in the region; his tenacity was remarkable. With the goal of advancing education and policy surrounding palliative care, the program has been successful in creating policies for more appropriate use of pain medication at the end of life, enhancing our ability to bring ethics education to communities throughout Oregon. In 2007, we launched the incredible Living with Life Threatening Illness course, which is now directed by Dr. Tyler Tate, who is an inspiring teacher. Dr. Tate's newest initiative is to educate future health care ethics leaders to become agents of change by integrating bioethics and the humanities to explore new, cutting-edge ethical issues.



Christine Mullowney, MD
Medical Director of the Oregon POLST Program funded by the Bill and Helen Jo Whitsell Endowment for Ethics



Tyler Tate, MD, MA
Director of the Miles J. Edwards Chair in Professionalism & Comfort Care





Katie H. Stowers, DO
*Ronald W. Naito Director in
Serious Illness Education*



Cliff Coleman, MD, MPH
*Doris & Mark Storms Chair in
Compassionate Communication*

Serious Illness Education

It has been spectacular to watch the growth of the Serious Illness Education program. With a vision of reducing “sub-optimal” notifications of serious medical news, we started by providing compassionate communication training in OHSU’s health professions schools and to practicing clinicians, and became the first medical school requiring graduating medical students to pass an assessment of their communication skills in disclosing serious news. We have the honor of carrying out Dr. Naito’s legacy of compassionate presence with patients through the establishment of the Ronald W. Naito Directorship in Serious Illness Education. Director Dr. Katie Stowers is incredibly gifted in her communication expertise, teaching skills, and leadership abilities. Her leadership has generated tremendous expansion and overwhelming demand of serious illness communication skills training. Dr. Stowers is more than deserving of the prestige and security that comes with holding a chair position, and I hope to see her directorship become a chair in the near future.

Ethics Education and Research

In 2008, we partnered with Madeline Brill Nelson to expand our ability to provide statewide ethics education by hosting educational activities, and to help honor the memory of her father, a pioneering cardiologist in Portland. Through the establishment of the Madeline Brill Nelson Char in Ethics Education, we were able to mentor cohorts of ethics consultants throughout the state, before they were required by health organizations, and hold conferences in communities across Oregon. Looking back, I am particularly proud of the partnerships we built with rural community leaders in order to host conferences together and meet local needs. I am eager to see who is appointed to this chair next, and see how they enhance the Center’s involvement in health care education and ethics policy development to more effectively serve ethics leaders in communities across Oregon.

Clear Communication and Health Literacy

The Doris and Mark Storms Chair in Compassionate Communication was established to expand our impact in communication education. We believe that clear communication and health literacy principles can be used to improve the health care experience and empower individuals by making important health information more accessible to everyone. So far, we have made great strides towards reaching this goal. Dr. Coleman’s expertise in health literacy education has led to increasing interest in clear communication at the organizational, regional, and national levels. The Viewpoint connecting health literacy, educational disparities, and systemic racism—published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* in June 2023 by Drs. Cliff Coleman and Jennifer DeVoe, and Samantha Birk—has garnered national and international attention, broadening the discussion of health literacy and equity. I have personally felt the impact of this important work by seeing my own family benefit from the health literacy principles he has brought forth to the Center’s Resilience and Empowerment in Later Years (RELY) initiative. As this program further expands, there is an essential need to build it’s research capacity in order to rigorously study what works in communication skills education, and maintain the Center’s ability to continue leading in innovation.

For help in making a gift to the Center for Ethics, please contact Liz Arrington at the OHSU Foundation at arringt1@ohsu.edu or 503-552-0716.

